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MEMORIAL

CONCERNING

PERSONAL AND FAMILY FASTING AND HUMILIATION.

BY THE LATE

REV. THOMAS BOSTON,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ETTRICK.

WITH PREFATORY REMARKS AND APPENDIX,

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER MOODY STUART, A.M.,

MINISTER OF FREE ST LUKE'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

"That which I see not teach Thou me."

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No. II.

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INTRODUCTION.

WHAT do you account the best means of promoting growth in grace? is a question often put to the minister of Christ, and he would rejoice to hear it yet more frequently. To this interesting inquiry he is sometimes constrained to reply—Grace cannot grow until it has been first implanted; in vain will you pour water on the ground in which no seed has yet been sown. Many may be found expressing vague desires for increase of grace, who are ignorant of the very meaning of the term, and whose hearts have never once conceived that there is any such thing as the grace of God in Christ to sinners—righteous favour to unrighteous men. But when the question is proposed by those who understand its force, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and desire to be strengthened with the bread of life, we should not hesitate to reply, that the most effectual means of furthering grace in the heart, is the *occasional allotment of considerable portions of time to devotion and godly contemplation.* Neither

by this, indeed, nor by any other exercise, will all be equally profited; for equal grace is not bestowed on all, but to every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ; yet no child of God, nor even any man desirous of being numbered with his children, can fail of deriving from it his own proper share of benefit.

The want, on the part of God's people, is to have their means and their privileges quickened. In ordinary circumstances, there is not nearly so great a poverty of privilege, as there is poverty of spirit in the midst of privilege. The means employed are not adequately fruitful. Under God's blessing, a remedy for this barrenness will often be found in the discharge of any neglected duty, whether moral or religious. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments." If any one omitted duty or privilege is brought into full operation, the blessing which descends on it often falls on all the others in a rich refreshing shower. On this ground alone, the occasional exercise to which we have referred might be strongly urged on many. But such prolonged meditation is, in its own nature, peculiarly fitted to throw life into all other duties. Every awakened soul knows how ready we all are to relapse into spiritual sleep—how quickly the same exercise in which we once "came to God, believing that he is," becomes formal and empty. Sometimes this lethargy has possessed us, not indeed without our concurrence, but without our observation, while at other times we are painfully, and perhaps sullenly, conscious of the declension. There may still remain some strivings of life, but the fire is never fanned into a freely

burning flame; the candle of the Lord shines in our hearts with a feeble and intermitting light; ours is no longer the onward progress of the flowing river, but the motion of the tide that no sooner flows than it hastens again to ebb. Now this state is ever tending to perpetuate itself. The even and orderly course of regularly returning duties, just so feeds the dying flame as to save it from extinction, but fails to rekindle it into former light and heat, much more to raise it into new strength and brightness. For this it is very desirable, and often absolutely needful, that there should be a solemn pause, in which the truth shall have time to penetrate the depths of the inner man, in which conviction of sin shall be deepened, the veil drawn quite aside that conceals from us the glorious fulness of the Only Begotten of the Father, the sense of guilt clearly removed, and the conscience sprinkled again from dead works to serve the living God. There are often true stirrings of the heart that go little deeper than the surface, but the fountains of the great deep that is within must be broken up, if we would cry to the Lord with our *whole* heart, and pour out our souls like water before him.

In giving it as our opinion that the best means of reviving and promoting the life of faith in the heart is to be found in the occasional allotment of considerable portions of time to reading of the word, self-examination, confession, meditation, and devotion, we have not forgotten that a judgment is sometimes pronounced apparently the very reverse. The only way, it is said, of walking closely with God, is to engage so frequently in communion with him, that there shall never be any long interruption of the intercourse,

and never, therefore, any feeling of estrangement. Now this unbroken communion, it is affirmed, cannot be maintained otherwise than by diligently employing for this purpose every little interval of leisure that occurs in the midst of other occupations, and by seeking to find or to form such intervals with all possible frequency. In this sentiment we completely concur; it is full of truth and wisdom. But how shall these fragments of time be at once saved and gained? Will the sluggish soul rise in a moment from earth to heaven? Will the worldly heart be unshackled in an instant from all its fetters? We grant, that if we shall thus employ these short but precious seasons, we shall not fail of progressing; but we greatly doubt if most persons shall be able to succeed in this lucrative economy of moments, without the occasional allotment to God of several successive hours. And we find one of the strongest arguments for the setting apart of longer periods, in the gain which we thereby effect of these other intervals, brief indeed, but numerous, and occupying in the aggregate no mean portion of a lifetime. There may be time enough for the quick and wakeful eye to catch a glimpse of the King in his beauty, and to behold the land that is very far off, when the space is much too short for awaking out of sleep, clearing our heavy eyeballs, and then looking unto Jesus. The same remark may be applied to unexpected temptations. The soldier of the cross is ill prepared for sudden assault, when his sword is rusted in its scabbard; but if he has taken time to polish his weapons, he is ready, at a moment's warning, to fight the battles of the Lord; and if at intervals, longer or shorter, as circumstances require,

he will employ a considerable portion of time in furbishing his arms, he will be enabled, with little daily trouble, to keep bright the whole armour of God.

The world has a prodigious advantage in the long unbroken spaces of time that are often, and perhaps of necessity, devoted to secular pursuits. It is not that the mere mental or bodily employment is in itself adverse to spiritual improvement, but either from the excess to which such occupation is carried, especially in the present day, or from the unavoidable mingling with men of the world, which it demands, there is often imprinted on the whole a character contrary to godliness. And shall the world have this advantage of continuous time all to itself? Is grace but a stranger here, and shall we never grant it such opportunity of undisturbed quiet for gathering growth and strength, as the world is enjoying every day? In every light in which we shall regard it, reason teaches the propriety, and experience the necessity, of an occasional period of rest and renewal for the soul. It will be asked, however, Is not the Sabbath just exactly such a season? Undoubtedly it is, and, as such, invaluable. Still, the very regularity of the Sabbath's return has rightly brought with it so regular a course of duties, that if the mind has once fallen into a formal state, the exercises of the seventh day are but too apt to partake of the general deadness. And, indeed, with the domestic and public duties of that blessed day many persons are so occupied, that they cannot easily command several consecutive hours for solitary reflection. But, besides, the Sabbath is a day of joy, a holy festival. And if the Head

of the Church, knowing that the joy of the Lord is her strength, hath graciously established a feast of happy rest, a regular Sabbath of godly joy, is it the mind of Him who hath said, "Blessed are they that mourn," that we should have no season of quiet in which we may sit down and keep an occasional Sabbath of godly grief? Such a season in the Jewish Church was the great day of yearly atonement, a penitential rest: "It shall be unto you a Sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls" (Lev. xxiii. 32)—a Sabbath in holiness and cessation from work, a fast in affliction, and abstinence from food. In the Christian Church there have been appointed no set times for fasting; but the ordinance is not therefore abrogated. If fasting was expressly ordained by the Old Testament, it is distinctly and frequently recognised by the New, both as a public duty for the Church, and as a private duty for its individual members. If any are doubtful, or rather are ignorant, on the subject, we refer them to the following Treatise. But we are not aware that the point is disputed. The duty is as generally acknowledged as the practice is generally disused. Many selfish arguments have affected the one, but no scriptural argument can be adduced against the other.

While fasting, however, cannot be otherwise regarded by the considerate and enlightened Christian than as a distinct and decided duty, it has seemed good to the Father of mercies to grant us great freedom in its observance. Difference in climate, in constitution, in command of time, may render the same exercise exceedingly hard or quite impracticable to one, which would be comparatively

easy to another; and we see wisdom and kindness in leaving both time and manner very much to our own discretion. This kindness was certainly never designed to embolden any one to neglect the duty, but rather to encourage every one to discharge it, not according to the measure of another man's strength, but according to his own ability and opportunity. A strict fast implies total abstinence from food, from business, from recreation, during its continuance. Accordingly, in our Directory for Public Worship, while public solemn fasting is appointed to continue the whole day, its observance is declared "to require total abstinence from all food, unless bodily weakness do manifestly disable." But while such is the full definition of a fast, it by no means follows that there can be no acceptable religious fasting of a more partial kind—partial either by abridging its duration or lessening its rigour. In the following Treatise the reader will find ample Scriptural warrant for both of these departures from the rule of absolute fasting; and most cordially do we subscribe to the conclusion which the author deduces from his reasoning on this point: "Wherefore I judge that none are to be solicitous as to what quantity of time, more or less, they spend in these exercises, so that the work of the time be done;—nay, I very much doubt, men lay a snare for themselves in tying themselves to a certain quantity of time in such cases; it is sufficient to resolve, that according to our ability we will take as much time as the work shall be found to require."

That fasting, within certain limits, is helpful to meditation and devotion, few will call in question,

but such as have never or but rarely made the attempt. The tendency is to quicken and, at the same time, to subdue and chasten the mind, while the very interruption of ordinary usages and comforts aids reflection. The practice is thought by some to savour of Popery, and by others, of self-righteousness. We suppose, however, that no one will accuse the framers of our Directory of any leaning to the Papacy. The Popery of fasting consists not in the practice itself, but in the superstitious regard for certain days of human appointment, and the worse than childish distinction of meats. And if self-righteousness naturally attaches to fasting more than to any other duty, how do we account for the fact, that the most strict and solemn of all the fasts in Israel was on the great day of atonement, that day when they saw their accumulated sins laid on the head of an innocent victim? Self-righteousness is more nurtured by the neglect of duty than by its performance.

The benefit of such occasional seasons of solemn penitential devotion, in the case either of an individual or a family, will be amply attested by all who have made the trial; and if at any time those who have been so engaged have not experienced present advantage, if their thoughts have been fatiguing and profitless, they will probably concur in the testimony of David Brainerd, that they have seldom failed to reap the blessing afterwards. But we have heard the remark, How should I occupy my thoughts for an entire day, or for the half of a day, or even during several successive hours? The question bears evidence to the sad spiritual poverty of our times. How occupy your thoughts! Have

you too little to think upon—too few sins in yourself to weep over—too few excellencies in the Lord Jesus Christ to rejoice over—too few difficulties in your path to pray over—too few friends, too few enemies, too few fellow-creatures to call forth your sympathies, your compassions, your entreaties? Of God alone, as an object of contemplation, the man according to his heart will say, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand."

If any man would enjoy the pleasures of the Christian life, he must be content to share in its severities. The way to have godly joy is not by refraining from godly sorrow. "Sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing," is the Christian's motto. Our road is easy when we go resolutely forward; but the way of the slothful is a hedge of thorns. The path to pleasure in any pursuit, much more in the pursuit of eternal life, is in never shrinking from pain. To court ease is to cherish trouble; to triumph over sloth is to secure rest.

A work proceeding from the pen of Thomas Boston, we shall not presume to recommend, farther than to say, that the following Memorial on Personal and Family Fasting is in every way worthy of its author. This little Treatise was formerly bound up along with some of the author's other works, but having fallen out of print, it is now republished in a separate form.

These remarks we shall close with adducing reasons for such a Treatise being specially called for in the present time:

1*st*, The duty of personal fasting has fallen sadly

into disuse. It has never, indeed, been quite neglected, but always observed by some hidden ones. Yet, through the excessive mingling together of the Church and the world, by which the world has learned, perhaps, some of the ways of the Church, but the Church has learned more of the ways of the world, the practice has often been entirely given up, even by God's own people. There is, however, an awakened attention to the subject; the thoughts of many have been drawn to it, even without communication together, the same Spirit instructing out of the same Word. But this increasing interest is still comparatively limited. So that there is, on the one hand, urgent reason for attention being called to the subject, and on the other, good ground for hope, that at present it will not be called in vain, but that many are prepared to perceive and embrace this portion of truth, as soon as it is fairly presented to their minds.

2*d*, The aspect of the Church requires it. The age is active, not contemplative, and the same may be affirmed of the Church. This spirit has not been barren of all benefit, but it has its own dangers. The most prominent practical defect in the Church at present is the want of contemplation. Such is their zeal for the welfare of others, that men have little time to attend to their own welfare. We have chosen the easier work of the two; it is really less laborious to improve others than to improve ourselves, while there is in it more apparent labour, and often more apparent and immediate success. There is such a demand for external work, on the part alike of laity and clergy, as leaves to both but little leisure, and often too little inclination for the hid-

den work of the heart. There is much more honour paid to the command, "Be instant in season and out of season," than to that equally important precept, "Meditate on these things." And accordingly, in the midst of a growth in zeal, and growth in activity, and growth, likewise, in liberality, there is often scarcely any perceptible growth in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Christians either have too little time, or take too little, for "looking unto Jesus," and "considering him."

2d, There is no blessing descending on the land adequate to the means that are in operation. There is good wrought, and good increasing; but the enlarged result is not proportioned to the enlarged instrumentality. The cause is probably this, that we take too little time, either to confess to God, or to pray to him, or to thank him, or to meditate on his name. In the midst of much working for him, He himself is slighted. If God is lightly honoured, if any thing is preferred before him, if his secondary service in the way of works done in his name, is advanced above the primary service of honour, and fear, and love to Himself, we cannot expect a blessing. He is a jealous God, and will have no gods before him; and we may possibly be making an idol of his very service, while we are forgetting Himself. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again *to the Lord;* let us pray in secret, that the seed so freely scattered may quickly spring—that in the multitude of means which are opened up, "the valley being now so full of ditches," those ditches may speedily be filled with living water.

4th, The times are perilous. Without foreboding evil, it may safely be affirmed of the present

time, more emphatically than of most other periods, that "we know not what a day may bring forth." Who will venture to predict the changes that a few years may disclose? In such a season it becomes us to be much in secret duties. Prayer and fasting may avert threatened evil, and convert it into good; or if evil come, we shall be enabled to bear it with holy fortitude and joy. The merely active Christians will feel themselves but ill at ease if the time shall arrive of suffering rather than of working. The value of much communion with God, and knowledge of his ways, will then be manifest. Many who seem to be strong-handed labourers, will prove but weak-hearted sufferers. Many who have been most ready to rejoice in the day of prosperity, will be the first to faint in a day of adversity. Let us then know well our refuge, and be accustomed ever and swiftly, and at a moment's warning, to run to it. Let us learn with the confidence of daily use, to cry, "Thou art my hiding-place," and we are safe in every event.

5th, It is a time of expected revival. Fasting and prayer have ever been honoured instruments in such a work. Whenever these duties have been abundant, the Church has prospered; or else, whenever the Church has prospered, these duties have abounded. Personal fasting is a cause of revival to individual souls, and every quickened soul is a revival blessing to the Church and the land. There is not one of us who can declare that his own unrepented sins are not his country's curse. Let each, therefore, repent for himself with a godly grief; let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, confidently leaving it with him to exalt us; and

we shall in due time find the promise made good, "Your fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be joy, and gladness, and cheerful feasts."—Amen.

EDINBURGH, *May* 1837.

A MEMORIAL, &c.

ZECH. xii. 12: "And the land shall mourn, every family apart—their wives apart."

CHAPTER I.

OF PERSONAL AND FAMILY FASTING AND HUMILIATION IN THE GENERAL.

RELIGIOUS fasts, kept in secret, by a particular person apart by himself, and by a particular family apart by themselves, concerning which this Memorial is presented both to saints and sinners, are not indeed the stated and ordinary duties of all times, to be performed daily, or at set times recurring, such as prayer, praise, and reading of the Word are; but they are extraordinary duties of some times, and to be performed occasionally, as depending entirely, in respect of the exercise of them, on the call of providence, which is variable.

They are authorised, and enjoined us, in the Word of God; and therefore, when we shall have performed them, we must say, "We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do;" and must abhor the least thought of meriting thereby.

The particular seasons of them are determined

by providence. Wherefore they who would be practisers of them must be religious observers of providence; otherwise God may be calling aloud for weeping and mourning, and girding with sackcloth, while they, not heeding it, are indulging themselves in joy and gladness, Isa. xxii. 12, 13—a dangerous adventure! Ver. 14, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord."

Hence the most serious and tender among knowing Christians will readily be found the most frequent in these exercises. It is on the pouring out of the Spirit that the land is to mourn, every family apart and their wives apart, Zech. xii. 10, 12. Paul was a scene wherein corrupt nature showed her cursed vigour, he being, when he was bad, very bad; and grace, in its turn, its sacred power, he being, when he was good, very good, and then in fastings often, 2 Cor. xi. 27.

These duties consist of an external and circumstantial part, and an internal and substantial part.

To the external and circumstantial part of them belong time, place, and abstinence.

I. First of all, a proper time must be set apart for these duties. And this is to be regulated by Christian prudence, as best suits the circumstances of the person or family.

We find the saints in Scripture ordinarily kept their fasts by DAY. But we have an instance of a personal fast kept by NIGHT, 2 Sam. xii. 16, "David fasted, and went in, and lay all NIGHT upon the earth." This I do the rather notice, to obviate the excuse of those who quite neglect this duty, under the pretence of their not being masters of their own

time. If the heart can be brought to it, one will readily find some time or other for it, either by day or else by night. It is recorded to the honour of one of the weaker sex, viz. Anna, that she "served God with fastings and prayers night and day," Luke ii. 36, 37.

As to the QUANTITY of time to be spent in personal or family fasting and humiliation, the duty, I judge, is to regulate it, and not it to regulate the duty. The family feast of Esther with her maidens, observed also by all the Jews in Shushan, lasted three days, Esth. iv. 16. We read of the fasting day, Jer. xxxvi. 6. Sometimes, it would seem, it was but a part of a day that was spent in such exercise; as in Cornelius, his personal fast, which seems to have been over before the ninth hour, that is, before three o'clock in the afternoon: Acts x. 30, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house," before which time of the fourth day, Peter, to whom Cornelius saith this, might be come, there being but thirty-six miles from Joppa to Cesarea, whither he came on the second day after he set out from Joppa, ver. 23, 24; compare ver. 8, 9, 17. Much about that time of the day, Daniel got the answer of his prayers made in his personal fast, namely, about the time of the evening oblation, or the ninth hour, Dan. ix. 21. And the people being "assembled with fasting (Neh. ix. 1), they read in the book of the law of the Lord their God, one-fourth part of the day, and another fourth part they confessed and worshipped the Lord their God," ver. 3. So they continued in the work six hours, from nine o'clock in the morning, as it would seem, till three

afternoon; that is, from the time of the morning sacrifice to the evening sacrifice, with which the work seems to have been closed, as, it may be presumed, they spent the morning in private preparation for the public duty.

Wherefore I judge, that none are to be solicitous as to what quantity of time, more or less, they spend in these exercises, so that the work of the time be done. Nay, I very much doubt, men lay a snare for themselves in tying themselves to a certain quantity of time in such cases. It is sufficient to resolve that, according to our ability, we will take as much time as the work shall be found to require.

II. A proper place is also to be chosen, where the person or family may perform the duty without disturbance from others. Time and place are natural circumstances of the action; and all places are alike now, under the gospel—none more holy than another. Men may pray every where, whether in the house or in the field, "lifting up holy hands," 1 Tim. ii. 8. Only, forasmuch as family fasting is a private duty, it requires a private place; and personal fasting a secret duty, it requires a secret place, according to the caution given us by our Saviour, Matt. vi. 18, "That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret."

III. Abstinence is included in the nature of the thing—abstinence from meat and drink, and all bodily pleasures whatsoever, as well as ceasing from worldly business. The Jews are taxed for finding pleasure, and exacting their labours in the day of their fast, Isa. lviii. 3. A time of religious fasting is a time for one's "afflicting his soul," ver. 5, by denying himself even those lawful comforts and de-

lights which he may freely use at other times. Exod. xxxiii. 4, "The people mourned, and no man did put on him his ornaments." Dan. ix. 3, "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer, and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." 1 Cor. vii. 5, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer."

The rule for abstinence from meat and drink cannot be the same as to all; for fasting, not being a part of worship, but a means to dispose and fit us for extraordinary worshipping, is to be used only as helping thereto; but it is certain, that what measure of it would be helpful to some for that end, would be a great hindrance to others. Wherefore weakly persons, whom total abstinence would disfit and indispose for duty, are not called to fast at that rate; in their case, that saying takes place, Hos. vi. 6, "I desired mercy and not sacrifice." Yet ought they not in that case to indulge themselves the use of meat and drink with the same freedom as at other times, but to use a partial abstinence, altering the quantity or quality of them, or both, so as they may thereby be afflicted, as the Scripture expresseth it, Lev. xxiii. 29. So Daniel, in his mourning, Dan. x. 3, "eat no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into his mouth."

Meanwhile, all these things are but the outward shell of these duties; the internal and substantial part of them lies in the following spiritual exercises:—

1. Serious meditation, and consideration of our ways, Hag. i. 5. Such times are to be set apart from conversing with the world, that we may the more solemnly commune with our own hearts, as

to the state of matters between God and us. In them we are diligently to review our past life. "Search and try our ways," Lam. iii. 40. And we are to search out our sins, by a sorrowful calling to remembrance the sins of our heart and life, and that as particularly as we can, and to search into them, by a deep consideration of the evil of them, and of their aggravations, the light, love, mercies, and warnings, we have sinned against, tracing them up to the sin of our nature, the impoisoned fountain from whence they have all proceeded. And the more fully and freely we converse with ourselves upon them, we will be the more fit to speak unto God anent (*concerning*) them, in confession and pleading for pardon.

2. Deep humiliation of soul before the Lord—the which was signified by the sackcloth and ashes used, under the law, on such occasions. The consideration of our ways is to be pursued, till our soul be humbled within us, our heart rent, not with remorse for sin only, but with regret and kindly sorrow for it, as an offence to a "gracious and merciful God," Joel ii. 12, 13; our face filled with shame and blushing before him, in the view of our spiritual nakedness, pollution, and defilement, Ezra ix. 6; and we loathe ourselves as most vile in our own eyes, Ezek. xxxvi. 31; Job xl. 4.

3. Free and open confession of sin before God, without reserve. This is a very material part of the duty incumbent on us in religious fasting, and the due consideration and deep humiliation just now mentioned do natively issue in it, producing, of course, extraordinary confession of sin, an exercise most suitable on such an occasion. Hence the Jews

spent "one fourth part of the day in confessing and worshipping," Neh. ix. 3; and the angel, who brought the answer to Daniel's supplications, about the time of the evening oblation, found him still praying and confessing his sin, Dan. ix. 20, 21. For here the sinner duly humbled has much ado, acting against himself the part of an accuser, recounting before the Lord his transgressions of the holy law, so far as he is able to reach them—the part of an advocate, opening up the particulars in their nature and aggravating circumstances—and the part of a judge, justifying God in all the evil he has brought upon him, and condemning himself as unworthy of the least of all his mercies, and deserving to perish under eternal wrath.

4. The exercise of repentance in turning from sin unto God, both in heart and life, the native result of deep humiliation and sincere confession. Joel ii. 12, "Turn ye even to me, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning." In vain will we fast, and pretend to be humbled for our sins, and make confession of them, if our love of sin be not turned into hatred, our liking of it into loathing, and our leaving to it into a longing to be rid of it, with all purpose to resist the motions of it in our heart, and the outbreakings thereof in our life; and if we turn not unto God as our rightful Lord and Master, and return to our duty again. If we are indeed true penitents, we will turn from sin, not only because it is dangerous and destructive to us, but because it is offensive to God, dishonours his Son, grieves his Spirit, transgresseth his law, and defaceth his image; and we will cast away all our transgressions, not only as one would cast away a live-coal

out of his bosom, for that it burns him; but as one would cast away a loathsome and filthy thing, for that it defiles him.

But withal it is to be remembered, that the true way to deal with a hard heart, to bring it to this temper, is to believe the gospel. As ravenous fowls first fly upward, and then come down on their prey, so must we first soar aloft in believing, and then we shall come down in deep humiliation, sincere and free confession, and true repentance, Zech. xii. 10, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn." Therefore the Scripture proposeth the object of faith in the promise of grace as a motive to repentance, that by a believing application thereof the hard heart may be moved and turned. Joel. ii. 13, "Turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious." One may otherwise toil long with it, but all in vain. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6; and therefore impossible to reach true humiliation, right confession, and sincere repentance, which are very pleasing to him, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20. The unbelieving sinner may be brought to roar under law-horror; but one will never be a kindly mourner but under gospel influences. When guilt stares one in the face, unbelief locks up the heart as a keen frost doth the waters; but faith in the Redeemer's blood melts it, to flow in tears of godly sorrow. Hard thoughts of God, which unbelief suggests to a soul stung with guilt, alienate that soul more and more from him; they render it like the worm, which, when one offers to tread upon it, presently contracts itself, and puts itself in the best posture of defence it can; but the believing of the proclaimed pardon touches the heart of the rebel so

that he casts down himself at the feet of his Sovereign, willingly yielding himself to return to his duty.

5. Solemn covenanting with God, entering into, or renewing covenant with him in express words. As a fast-day is a day to "loose the bands of wickedness," so it is a day for coming explicitly into the bond of the holy covenant: Jer. l. 4, "Going and weeping, they shall go, and seek the Lord their God." Ver. 5, "Saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." Accordingly, this was an eminent part of their fast-day's work, Neh. ix. 38. It follows, of course, on due humiliation, confession, and the exercise of repentance, whereby the league with sin is broken. And it lies in a solemn professing before the Lord, that we take hold of his covenant, believing on the name of his Son as the Saviour of the world, and our Saviour, and that in and through him he will be our God, and we shall be his people; and that we are from the heart content, and consent to take him for our portion, Lord and Master, and resign ourselves to him only, wholly, and for ever. Heb. viii. 10, "This is the covenant, I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Isa. xlix. 8, "I will give thee for a covenant." Chap. lvi. 6, "Every one that taketh hold of my covenant." John i. 12, "As many as received him, that believe on his name." Psal. xvi. 2, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord. Isa. xliv. 5, One shall say, I am the Lord's."

6. *Lastly*, Extraordinary prayer, in importunate addresses and petitions unto our covenanted God, for that which is the particular occasion of our fast.

The confession and the covenanting are, both o them, to be done prayer-wise, as appears from Dan ix. 4–15, Neh. ix. 6–38. But besides, ther must be prayers, supplications, and petitions mad for what the person or family hath particularly i view in their fast: Psal. xxxv. 13, "When the were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humble my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned int mine own bosom." And, indeed, the great end an design for which such fasts are to be kept is, tha thereby the parties may be the more stirred up unt and fitted for wrestling with God in prayer, and t the case which they have particularly at heart. S the Ninevites having their threatened overthrow a heart, it was ordered that "man and beast" shoul be "covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unt God," Jon. iii. 8; that is, that the men shoul cry in prayer for pity and sparing; and to the en they might be moved to the greater fervency in thes their praying cries, it is provided, that they an their beasts too should be covered with sackcloth and that their beasts, having fodder and water with held from them on that occasion, should be made cry for hunger and thirst, even to cry unto Go namely, interpretatively, as the "young ravens cr unto him," Job xxxviii. 41. At which rate, th cries of the beasts, being mixed with the cries men, would make the solemnity of that extraord nary mourning very great; and the hearts of m being, every now and then during that solemnit pierced with the cries of the harmless brutes, wou be stirred up to a more earnest, fervent, and impo tunate pleading with God for mercy.

Thus far of *personal* and *family fasting* a *humiliation* in the general.

CHAPTER II.

OF PERSONAL FASTING AND HUMILIATION IN PARTICULAR.

FROM what is said, it appears that a PERSONAL fast is a religious exercise, wherein a particular person having set apart some time from his ordinary business in the world, spends it in some secret place by himself, in acts of devotion tending to his humiliation and reformation, and particularly in prayer, with fasting. Concerning the which we shall consider, 1*st*, The divine warrant for it; 2*d*, The call to it; and 3*d*, Offer advice how to manage it.

SECTION I.—*Of the Divine* WARRANT *for Personal Fasting and Humiliation.*

Forasmuch as will-worship is condemned by the Word, and that can never be obedience to God, whereof his revealed will is not the reason and rule, it concerneth all who would perform this duty in faith, so as to have accepted it of him, to know who hath required it at their hands. And to set that matter in a light sufficient to satisfy and bind it upon the conscience, as a duty owing unto God, let these few things following be duly weighed :—

1. God requires it in his Word, and that both directly and indirectly.

It is directly required, James iv. 9, "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep." It is plain enough from the context, these things are proposed as agreeing to particular persons in their personal capacity

See ver. 8, 10. And what it is that is required o
them in these words, could not miss to be as plai
to those unto whom they were originally directed
to wit, that it is fasting and humiliation that wa
intended by them. For this epistle was written t
those who were Jews by nation, "the twelve tribe
scattered abroad," chap. i. 1. And this is the ver
language of the Old Testament in that case, th
same manner of expression, in which their prophet
called them to it. Lev. xxiii. 27, "On the tenth
day of the seventh month, there shall be a day o
atonement, and ye shall afflict your souls," to wit
"with fasting." Isa. lviii. 5, "Is it such a fas
that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict hi
soul?" Or, more agreeable to the original, "Shal
a fast I will chuse, a day of men's afflicting thei
soul, be like this?" Joel ii. 12, "Turn ye even t
me, with fasting, and with weeping, and with
mourning." And the *mourning* required in thes
texts, differs from the *weeping*, as the habit and ges
tures of mourners differ from their *tears;* Gen
xxxvii. 34, Eccles. iii. 4, directly pointing unto th
duty of fasting and humiliation.

It is also required indirectly in the word, whic
supposeth it to be a duty the saints will practise
inasmuch as divine directions are given anent it
Now, it is inconsistent with the holiness of God t
give directions for regulating of will-worship, whic
he doth simply comdemn, Matt. xv. 9, Col. ii. 23
Jer. vii. 31. But our Saviour gives directions abou
personal fasting: Matt. vi. 16, "When ye fast, b
not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for the
disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto me
to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their re

ard." Ver. 17, "But thou, when thou fastest, noint thine head, and wash thy face." Ver. 18, That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto ıy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which eth in secret shall reward thee openly." And it evident that these directions do concern secret ıd personal fasting; for, besides that the text eaks expressly of that which is done in secret, ıd therefore is to be kept secret, contrary to the actice of the hypocritical Pharisees, who made it eir business to propale (*publish*) their secret devo-ns, the outward signs of fasting are commended in e case of public fasts, Exod. xxxiii. 4, Jonah iii. 8, el ii. 15, 16, 17. In like manner the apostle Paul ves a direction about this duty, 1 Cor. vii. 5, Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with nsent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to sting and prayer"—where the consent mentioned necessary determines the fasting to be personal; rasmuch as, in the case of public fasts, that matter predetermined by a superior authority; and in e case of family fasts, it follows, of course, on the pointment of such a fast.

2. It is promised that the saints shall perform this ty, Zech. xii. 10, "I will pour upon the house David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, e spirit of grace and of supplications." Ver. 12, And the land shall mourn, every family apart, d their wives apart." Thus, in virtue of the grace the covenant, this duty is made the matter of a omise, even as other duties of holy obedience are. cordingly our Lord promised it, in the case of disciples in particular, Matt. ix. 15, "The days ll come when the bridegroom shall be taken from

them, and then shall they fast;" to wit, personally for it was not the neglect of the public fast appointe and stated in the law, Lev. xxiii. 27-32, that the were taxed for, but the neglect of personal fasting used by the disciples of John, upon the occasion c their Master, the friend of the Bridegroom, his bein taken from them; and also by the Pharisees, out c their superstitious and vain-glorious disposition Matt. ix. 14, with Luke xviii. 12.

3. It is recommended unto us by the practice c the saints mentioned in Scripture. It was, as w have already seen, practised by David, a man "ac cording to God's own heart," 2 Sam. xii. 1(Psal. xxxv. 13; by Daniel, a man greatly belove(Dan. ix. 3, and x. 2, 3; and by the devout cer turion, Acts x. 30. It was a frequent exercise Paul, the laborious apostle of the Gentiles, 2 Co xi. 27. These all had the seal of God's good plea sure with their work set upon it, in the communic with God allowed them therein. And it is o duty to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, fo lowing their approved example.

4. *Lastly*, That occasional religious fasting ar humiliation is a duty required in the Word of Go and to be performed by societies in a public cap city, will not, I presume, be questioned. No upon that ground the duty of personal fasting ar humiliation may be thus evinced.

1*st*, There is nothing in the nature of religio fasting and humiliation, that of itself is public, necessarily requiring a plurality of persons to jo therein. The preaching of the word, and celebr tion of the sacraments, do, in their own nature, r quire society, and therefore are not to be used

single person alone in his closet. But it is not so this case. One may keep a fast alone, as well as may pray, read the Scriptures, and sing psalms, one. Now, whatever ordinances God hath appointed, and hath not tied to societies or assemblies, r to any certain set of men, they are the duty of ery one in particular who is capable to perform em.

2*dly*, The ground upon which the duty of fasting d humiliation is bound on societies, in a public pacity, takes place in the case of particular persons, namely, that extraordinary duties are called r on extraordinary emergents and occasions. If, en, a church or congregation is called to fasting d humiliation, on such occasions in their case, is t a particular person called to the same, on such casions in his case? If abounding sin, or judgents threatened or inflicted on a land, require lemn public fasting and humiliation, do not e same things, in the case of a particular person, ll for personal fasting and humiliation? Surely ery one ought to keep his own vineyard, with e same diligence the public vineyard is to be kept; one does not so, it will be bitterness in the end, ant. i. 6.

3*dly*, Extraordinary duties to be performed by a hole nation, church, or congregation, cannot be on overtaken, because all great bodies are slow in eir motions, and sometimes the season may be er ere they can move thereto in a public capacity: a, and ofttimes God is calling aloud, by his prodence, for national and congregational fasting and miliation, when the call is not heeded by them whom it is incumbent to appoint them. Now,

what should particular persons, discerning the c of providence, do in such cases? Must they sit st and not answer the call as they may, because th cannot answer it as they would? Should they r rather keep personal and family fasts, for th causes for which others either cannot or will r keep public fasts? as in the case of God's pleadi with the land of Egypt, "He that feared the wo of the Lord amongst the servants of Pharaoh, ma his servants and his cattle flee into the house Exod. ix. 20. When the Jews are dispersed, some them in one country, some in another, how shall t land mourn? Must they wait until they be gather together? No; but the land shall mourn, famil apart, and particular persons apart, even as wh our neighbour's house is on fire, we do not ta until the whole town or neighbourhood be gather but immediately fall to work ourselves, to do wh lies in our power for quenching the flames.

And thus much shall suffice to have spoken the *divine warrant* for this extraordinary duty.

Section II.—*Of a providential* Call *to perso Fasting and Humiliation.*

The case of the church, the case of a neighbo and one's own private case, may each of them sep rately, and much more all of them conjunctly, fou a providential call to personal fasting and humil tion. The prophet Daniel kept a personal fast the church's account, Dan. ix. 2, 3; David on l neighbour's account, Psal. xxxv. 13, and on l own, 2 Sam. xii. 16.

Zion's children should reckon her interest theirs: d as secret personal fasting for public causes ar- es a truly public spirit, so it is highly commend- le, and, being rightly managed, is very acceptable the sight of God, Dan. ix. 20, 21.

The communion of saints is an article of our eed, and a most beneficial thing in the practice ereof. Considered only in these two parts of it, mely, a communion of burdens, Gal. vi. 2, and a mmunion of prayers, Jas. v. 16, it is one of the st cordials the travellers towards Zion have by e way. For one to love his neighbour as himself, ereof secret fasting on his account is a good evi- nce, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and rifices, Mark xii. 33. And whether it do good his neighbour or not, it will not fail, if rightly naged, to return with a plentiful reward into his n bosom, according to the Psalmist's experience, al. xxxv. 13.

Howbeit, it is hardly to be expected, that one ll be brought to the practice of this duty on the count of others, till once he has been engaged erein upon his own account. But surely, if pro- sors of religion were more exercised about their n spiritual case, this duty of personal fasting and miliation would not be so rare as it is. Paul, who d much of this kind of exercise, Acts xxiv. 16, s "in fastings often," 2 Cor. xi. 27; "kept under s body, and brought it into subjection," 1 Cor. 27.

Now, any or all of these cases call for this extra- linary duty, in three kinds of events, other cir- mstances agreeing and pointing thereto in the nduct of providence.

Either, 1. When there is any special evil actual lying upon us, the church, or our neighbour whom we have a special concern, whether it be sinful or a penal evil. There are some sins th leave such guilt on the conscience, and such a d filement on the heart and life, as call aloud f fasting and humiliation, in order to a recovery fro the dismal effects thereof: Jas. iv. 8, "Clean your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts double-minded." Ver. 9, "Be afflicted, and mour and weep." Accordingly the Israelites gathered Mispeh, being sensible of the abominable idolatri they had fallen into, "fasted that day and said, W have sinned against the Lord," 1 Sam. vii. 6.

In like manner, when the tokens of God's hi displeasure are gone out in afflicting providences, is time for us to roll ourselves in the dust, and to accommodate our spirit and way to the dispens tion, humbling ourselves before him with fastir Thus Nehemiah found himself called to fastir upon information received of the continued ruins Jerusalem, and the affliction that the returned ca tives were in, Neh. i. 3, 4; David, and those wi him, upon the news of the defeat of Israel, and t death of Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. i. 12; and t people upon the consideration of the slaugh which the Benjamites had made among the Judges xx. 26.

Or, 2, When there is any special stroke threate ed and impending. Thus the inhabitants of Jer salem, being in imminent danger from their enemi were providentially called to weeping and mournii though they heeded it not, Isa. xxii. 12, 13. E the Ninevites took such an alarm, and compli

ith the call of providence, Jon. iii. 4-9. So did avid, when God struck his child with sickness, Sam. xii. 15, 16. Yea, and so did even Ahaz, hen he had heard Elijah's heavy message against im and his house, 1 Kings xxi. 27. When the lion ars, it becomes us to fear; when God's hand is fted up, and he appears to be about to strike, it is igh time for us to strip ourselves of our ornaments, id to lie in sackcloth and ashes.

Or else, 3. When there is some special mercy id favour to be desired of the Lord; as was the eturn of the Babylonish captivity for which Daniel ept his fast, Dan. ix. 1, 2, 3. Christians exercised ito godliness, will rarely, if ever, want their parcular suits and special errands unto the throne of race. The same God who makes some mercies ll into the lap of others, without their being at uch pains about them, will give his own children any an errand unto himself for them ere they btain them, because they must have them in the ay of the covenant; whereas they come to others nly in the way of common providence, in which a lasting curse may come along with the mercy.

To set this matter in a yet clearer light, we shall xemplify these general heads in one's own private se, and that in several instances, to be accommoate to the case of the Church and of our neighour, by those who are disposed religiously to obrve and consider the dispensations of providence. here is a variety of these particular cases, which, ith agreeing circumstances to be discerned by each ne for himself, call for personal fasting and humiation. As,

1. When, through a long track of sinning and

careless walking, the case of one's soul is left qui
in disorder and confusion: Isa. xxxii. 11, "Tremb
ye women that are at ease: be troubled, ye carele
ones: strip ye and make ye bare, and gird sackclo
upon your loins." Certainly the voice of God un
such is, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider yo
ways," Hag. i. 5. Want of consideration ruins mar
They deal with their souls as some foolish men
with their estates, running on without consideratic
till they have run themselves aground. But thc
who adventure so to take a time for sinning, ha
need to take also a set time for mourning; for it
not to be expected that accounts which have be
long running on can be cleared and adjusted wi
a glance of one's eye. O careless sinner! consid
how matters stand betwixt God and you: are y
in any tolerable case for the other world, for dea
and eternity? are not matters gone quite to wra
with your soul? are you not pining away in yo
iniquity? is not the state and condition of your so
like that of the sluggard's vineyard, that "was
grown over with thorns, and nettles had cover
the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof w
broken down?" Prov. xxiv. 31. O set about person
fasting and humiliation! Ordinary pains will n
serve to recover the long-neglected garden: it mu
be trenched, digged deep. A little may help tl
case that is timely seen to: but all this will
little enough for thine, which hath lain so lo
neglected.

2. When one is under convictions, entertaini
some thoughts to reform. On such an occasi
was that fast kept, Neh. ix. 1, 2, and had very go
effects, ver. 38, chap. x. 1, 28, 29. This method

such a case, a proper means to bring men to a
oint in the matter, and to fix their resolutions,
herwise ready to prove abortive. Some have con-
ctions, which, at times, coming and passing away,
ke a stitch in one's side, set them now and then
their prayers, but never prevail to bring them to
settled course of reformation of life: their disease
too inveterate to be so easily carried off. But
ere they so wise as to make these convictions a
atter of solemn seriousness, setting some time
art on that occasion for personal fasting and hu-
iliation, they might, through the divine blessing,
rn to a good account for the interest of their
uls.

3. When the conscience is defiled with the guilt
some atrocious sin. Doth national guilt of that
nd require national fasting? and doth not per-
nal guilt of the same kind require personal fast-
g? Yea, sure, God calls men, in that case, to be
flicted, and mourn, and weep, Jas. iv. 8, 9.
rong diseases require strong remedies, and con-
ience-wasting guilt, deep humiliation; as in
avid's case, Psa. li.; and Peter's, Matt. xxvi. 75.
his kind of guilt, deeply wounding and stinging
e soul, defiling and wasting the conscience, may
without any scandalous enormities of life appear-
g to the view of the world. God is witness to
cret sins, even to the sins of the heart: and men
tender consciences will be sick at the heart with
ch sins as are hid from all the world, and will
ver move others.

4. When one would fain get over a snare he is
ten caught in, and have victory over a lust that
th often mastered him. There are not a few who

have many good things about them, yet lack on thing: and that one thing is like to part betwee heaven and them, marring all their good thing both by way of evidence and of efficacy, Mark 21. They know that it is wrong; they often r solve to amend; and they would fain get above i but whenever a new temptation comes, Satan a tacking them on the weak side, down go all the resolutions, like a bowing high wall, whose breal ing cometh suddenly in an instant, and they a hard and fast in the snare again. O consider, th this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fastin Matt. xvii. 21. Set, therefore, some time apart f personal fasting and humiliation, on the account that very thing, that you may wrestle with God i prayer anent it, and use this method, time aft time, until you prevail against it: else that o thing may ruin you, and you will be condemn for it, not because you could not help it, but becau you would not use the means appointed of God f relief in that case.

5. When one is under a dead desertion; in whic case the Lord is departed, the wonted influenc from heaven are withheld, but the wound n smarting by reason of spiritual deadness, the par is not much moved therewith. This was the ca of the spouse, Cant. iii. 1, "By night on my bed sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought hi but I found him not." And for a recovery from she made some extraordinary efforts in the way duty, ver. 2, 3, 4. The same appears to be t case of many, with whom some time a-day it w better than now. God hides his face from then their incomes from heaven are rare and scanty,

mparison of what they have formerly been; they e sighing and going backward. Though they go the und of ordinary religious exercises still, yet it is ng since they had a token from the Beloved, access or communion with God in them. O fast and ay for a recovery, as did Israel, when, after they id been long deserted, and very little affected with they began at length to lament after the Lord, Sam. vii. 2, 6. It requires much, in the way of dinary means, for to go to the ground of such a case, nerein by much slothfulness the building hath de- yed, and through idleness of the hands the house oppeth through. Though true grace can never totally lost, yet it may be brought to such a ry low pass, that as some scholars, for retrieving e loss sustained through long absence from the nool must begin anew again, so some Christians, order to their recovery, must be carried through e several steps of conversion again, as we may rn from our Saviour's words to Peter, with rela- n to his fall, Luke xxii. 32, "I have prayed thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou converted, strengthen thy brethren."

6. When one is under a felt and smarting deser- n: Isa. xlix. 14, "Zion said, the Lord hath for- en me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." This a more hopeful case than the former: howbeit it es to the quick: Prov. xviii. 14, "The spirit of nan will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit no can bear?" There are many bitter ingredients it, which make it a sorrowful case, exquisitely nful to the soul, like that of a woman "forsaken, d grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth," Isa. liv. To one thus deserted, wrath appears in the face

of God, and impressed on every dispensation, Ps lxxxviii. 7, 8. To his sense and feeling, his "pray is shut out," Lam. iii. 8; and flashes of hell cor into his soul, Psa. lxxxviii. 15, 16. Under t pressure hereof, some very grave and solid perso have not been able to contain themselves: Job xx 28, "I went mourning without the sun: I stood u and I cried in the congregation." This smarting d sertion, in greater or lesser measure, has often be the fearful outgoing from the dead desertion, as was in the experience of the spouse, Cant. v. 3- And it is a loud call to personal fasting and hun liation: Matt. ix. 15, "When the Bridegroom sh be taken from them, then shall they fast."

7. When one is pressed with some outward affl tion, whether in his body, relations, name, substan or otherwise. In such a case, Job rent his mant and shaved his head, and fell down upon the grou and worshipped," Job i. 20; and David's "kn were weak through fasting," Psa. cix. 24. time of affliction is a special season for fasting a prayer. The Lord often lays affliction on his peo on purpose to awaken them to their duty, and as were to necessitate them to it: even as Absalom, w having in vain sent once and again for Joab, oblig him at length to come unto him, by causing set corn field on fire. This is the way to get afflict sanctified, and in due time removed: Jas. iv. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, a he shall lift you up." We ought therefore to ta heed that we be not of those who cry not when bindeth them; but that in this case we do as B hadad's servants, who, upon a signal defeat of army, "put sackcloth on their loins, and ropes

heir heads, and went out" as humble supplicants to the king of Israel," who had smote them, Kings xx. 31.

8. When, by the aspect of providence, one is hreatened with some such affliction. It is an unracious hardness not to be affected when the Lord lifting up his hand against us. He was a man of n excellent spirit who said, "My flesh trembleth r fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," 'sa. cxix. 120. Though he was an hero that feared he face of no man, he laid aside that bravery of pirit when he had to do with his God. Wherefore, hen the Lord was threatening the removal of a hild of his by death, though the continuing of that hild in life would have been a lasting memorial of is reproach, yet the impression of the Lord's anger n that threatening dispensation moved him to etake himself to personal fasting and humiliation efore the Lord, for the life of that child, 2 Sam. ii. 16, 22.

9. When one would have light and direction in ome particular matter of special weight. It is much o be lamented, that men professing the belief of a ivine providence in human affairs, should, in confience of their own wisdom, take the weight of their hatters on themselves, without acknowledging God n them, aiming only to please themselves therein, nd not their God, as if their fancy, conveniency, r advantage, and not their conscience, were conerned in their determinations and resolves. Hence is that wise men are often left to signal blunders n conduct, and feel marks of God's indignation ustly impressed on their rash determinations. Thus oshua and the princes of Israel, in the matter of

the league with the Gibeonites, finding no need o
the exercise of their faith, but of their wit, vainl
imagining they could see well enough with their ow
eyes, "took of their victuals, and asked not couns
at the mouth of the Lord," and were egregiousl
overreached by them, as they saw afterward, whe
it was too late, Josh. ix. 14, 22.

We have a divine command and promise, extend
ing to our temporal as well as to our spiritual con
cerns, and very suitable to the necessary dependenc
we have on God in all things, as creatures on thei
Creator: Prov. iii. 5, "Lean not unto thine ow
understanding;" ver. 6, "In all thy ways acknow
ledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." We ough
therefore, in all our matters, to eye him as our direc
tor, and steer our whole course, as he directs by hi
word and providence. Since he hath said, "I wil
teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I wil
guide thee with mine eye," Psa. xxxii. 8, it i
unquestionably our duty to "set the Lord alway
before us," Psa. xvi. 8; to regulate our acting
and ceasing from action, by the divine direction
even as the Israelites in the wilderness removed an
rested, just as the pillar of cloud and fire remove
or rested before them," Numb. ix. 15–23.

Sometimes, indeed, an affair may be in such
situation as allows not an opportunity of making a
address unto God, for light in it, by solemn prayer
but we are never so circumstanced, but we hav
access to lift up our eyes to the holy oracle, in
devout ejaculation, as Nehemiah did in such a situa
tion, Neh. ii. 4, 5. And there is a promise relativ
to that case, which has been often verified, in th
comfortable experience of the saints taking tha

ethod to obtain the divine direction: Prov. iv. 12, When thou runnest thou shalt not stumble." But ristians should accustom themselves to lay their tters before the Lord, in solemn prayer, for light d direction therein, as far as circumstances do rmit. So did Abraham's pious servant with the air his master had committed to him, Gen. xxiv. , 13, 14. And accordingly he had a pleasurable perience of the accomplishment of the promise ative to that case: Prov. iv. 12, "When thou st, thy steps shall not be straitened." And where y are to be determined in a matter of special ight, such as the change of their lot, the choice an employment, some momentous undertaking, any the like occurrences in life, whereof serious ristians will find not a few, allowing them time l opportunity to deliberate on them; that is a cial occasion for extraordinary prayer with fasting, light from the Lord, the Father of lights, to dis- er what is their duty therein, and what he is ling them to in the matter. So the captives re- ning from Babylon with Ezra kept a fast at the er Ahava, "to seek of God a right way," Ezra . 21.

10. When duty being cleared in a matter of cial weight, it comes to the setting to; in which nt, one needs the presence of God with him rein, the divine blessing upon it, and success in it. us Esther being to go in unto the king, to make uest for her people, there was solemn fasting on t occasion used by her and the Jews in Shushan, th. iv. 8, 16. And Barnabas and Saul being called God unto a special work, were not sent away it, but after fasting and prayer, Acts xiii. 2, 3.

We need not only light from the Lord to d
cover unto us our duty in particular cases, but th
being obtained, we need also his presence to
along with us in the thing, that we may be enabl
rightly to make our way, which he bids us g
Therefore said Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 15, "If t
presence go not with me, carry us not up henc
Sin hath defiled every thing to us; and howev
promising any worldly state, condition, or thi
whatsoever, may appear in our eyes, yet, if we ha
not the presence of God in it, and his blessing up
it, to purify it unto us, we will be mired in it, a
find a snare and a trap, if not a curse, therein to

11. When one, having some unordinary difficul
to encounter, is in hazard of being ensnared eith
into sin or danger. On such an occasion was t
fore-mentioned fast at Shushan kept—Esther je
parding her life in "going in unto the king in t
inner court," not called by him, Esth. iv. 11, 1
The ship has need to be well ballasted that sa
while the wind blows high: and in a difficult a
ensnaring time, there is need of fasting and pray
for Heaven's safe conduct through it. Men's trus
ing to themselves in such a case cannot miss of b
traying them into snares.

12. *Lastly*, When one hath in view some spec
solemn approach unto God; in which case a spec
preparation is requisite. Thus Jacob called l
family to such preparation, in the exercise of r
pentance, in order to their appearing before the Lo
at Bethel, Gen. xxxv. 2, 3. The Israelites we
called to the same, in order to the awful solemni
of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, Exod. xi
10, 11, 15. And it is observable, that, whereas t

ast of tabernacles was the most joyful of all the asts the Jews had throughout the year, a solemn st was appointed of God to be observed always fore it, four free days only intervening, Lev. xxiii. , 34. For in the method of grace, none stand so r for a lifting up as those who are most deeply mbled, Isa. xl. 4, Luke xviii. 14, Jas. iv. 10. herefore it is a laudable practice of our church, at congregations keep a congregational fast, before e celebration of the feast of the sacrament of the rd's Supper among them, in order to their prepar- on for a solemn approach unto God in that holy linance. And, for the same reason, secret fasting particular persons apart, and private fasting by nilies apart, especially such as have not access to n in the public fast, would be very seasonable on h an occasion. And if those secret and private ts could more generally obtain and get place in ngregations, some little time before the commu- n work did begin, it would be a token for good, l might prove like the noise and shaking among dry bones that ushered in the breathing on the in, and the causing them to stand "up upon ir feet," Ezek. xxxvii. 7, 10.

These things duly considered, each Christian may in case to judge for himself, when it is that he is ler a providential call to personal fasting and hu- iation.

CTION III.—*Directions anent Personal Fasting and Humiliation.*

Having seen the divine warrant for personal fast- and humiliation, and considered the nature of a

providential call to that extraordinary duty, it mains to offer some advices or directions for t profitable managing of it in practice.

Direction I.

When you find that the Lord is calling you to t duty, prudently make choice of a fit time and pl for it aforehand, wherein you may have access go about it without distraction. And carefully d pose of your ordinary affairs before that time, so you may have no let nor hindrance from that p which you can prevent. Works of necessity a mercy, which are lawfully done on the Lord's are much more so in this case, wherein the d waits not on the time, but the time on the du Yea, in case something of worldly business, wh you could not foresee nor prevent, do fall out time of your fast, and cannot be deferred or put without some notable inconveniency, you may, wi out scruple, despatch it; for the time is not h But in that case, labour that, if possible, your w be not thereby marred; and carefully keep up y frame of spirit for the duty you are engaged Christian prudence to weigh circumstances, which you are to look up unto the Lord, is ne sary to determine herein, according to the gen rules of the word, Matt. xii. 3–7.

As for such as are not masters of their ti which is the case of servants, they cannot lawf dispose of their time at their own hand, even this duty; for our God "hates robbery for bu offering," Isa. lxi. 8. But then they may en vour to procure the necessary time at the han

eir masters, to whom, if they be godly and serious, ey may modestly hint their design, pitching on a ne with so much discretion, as that their good may ɔt be evil spoken of. And if any be so unmindful their Master which is in heaven, as to refuse such discreet desire, yet let not the party by any means ink that the sacred nature of the thing he has in ɔw gives him a power to rob his master of so uch of his time; for men can offer nothing to od, with a good conscience, but what is their own; d exercises of devotion are so far from slacking e tie of moral duty to our neighbour, that they are thing but an outward form of devotion, unacceptle to God, so far as they do not influence the party a careful and religious observance of the duties morality, such as judgment or justice, mercy, and th or faithfulness, Matt. xxiii. 23. Neither yet him imagine, on the other hand, that he is then further concerned to look after that extraordiry duty; for no reason can be assigned why one ght not to be willing to be at as much pains or pense, for procuring to himself an opportunity of mmunion with God, in that duty, as he will be an opportunity of attending some worldly busiss of his own, placing another in his room. But none of these can effectuate it, then, though the y or time of labouring is the master's, yet the ght or time of resting is the servant's, let him ve unto God what he has, and it shall be acpted through Christ. But, excepting the case of providential necessity obliging one to take the ght for this exercise, the day is, generally speakg, the most proper time for it, beginning the exise in the morning.

Direction II.

Make some preparation for it the night befo
turning your thoughts towards the exercise y
have in view, considering of it, and avoiding eve
thing that hath a tendency to disfit or indispose
it. Shun carnal mirth and sensual delights; s
sparingly; to eat the more, that one is to fast re
giously after, is to mock God, and cheat on
self. In the intervals of sleep, take heed that yo
thoughts be not vain, and much more that they
not vile; but that they be such as tend to fit y
for the extraordinary duty in view.

Direction III.

Rise early in the morning, even sooner than
dinary, unless by reason of bodily weakness th
would tend to disfit you for the work; for then y
are called, in a special manner, to watch un
prayer, Eph. vi. 18. Sleep is a fleshly comfo
which, howbeit it is necessary, yet one is in th
case called to be sparing of. Therefore the prie
were bid "lie all night in sackcloth," Joel. i. 1
and it is recorded of Ahab, that he in his fast lay
1 Kings xxi. 27—a proper means to make o
sleep sparingly.

Direction IV.

As soon as you awake in the morning, let h
thoughts, with a view to your work, immediate
have access into your heart. And beware that c
nal or worldly thoughts get not the start of ther
for if you allow that, they will be to your soul li
water poured upon firewood, that makes it hard

indle. Surely, if one is at any time to follow the xample of the Psalmist David, Psa. cxxxix, 18, When I awake, I am still with thee," he is to do at such a time.

Direction V.

Let your ordinary duties of prayer and reading of e word be first of all performed; for extraordi-ıry duties are not to justle out the ordinary but be superadded unto them. And, in such prayer, g of God grace to enable you for the work before u, according to his promise. Yea, it may be very pedient, that thereafter you go unto God again prayer, particularly and purposely for his grace enable you unto the duty now come to the set-ıg to. And forasmuch as our corrupt hearts are, ıon a near view of a difficult and laborious holy ercise, very apt to wax faint, and our hands to ng down, albeit "the way of the Lord" is declared be "strength to the upright," Prov. x. 29, do u therefore, by all means, study to exercise faith, d labour to believe steadfastly that his grace shall sufficient for you, to the making of "his yoke sy, and his burden light" unto you, 2 Cor. xii. 9, th Matt. xi. 30. For no man shall ever be able perform a duty acceptably unto God, without a lieving persuasion, in greater or lesser measure, an allowance made him of grace sufficient for an ceptable performance of it, 2 Cor. iii. 4, 5, Phil. 12. 13. One will otherwise be but a wicked d slothful servant, as our Saviour teacheth, att. xxv. 24, 25, 26.

Direction VI.

After prayer in faith, for the aid of divine grac
as in the preceding direction, begin the work wi
a solemn review of your sins, in deep meditati
and serious communing with your own heart ther
upon; applying yourself to think of them, in su
manner as you think of your affairs, when conside
ing how to manage them in cases of difficult
God calls for this at your hand: Hag. i. 5, "Th
saith the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways;" Lai
iii. 40, "Let us search and try our ways, and tu
again to the Lord." It is recommended to us
the practice of the saints: Psa. lxxvii. 6, "I cor
mune with mine own heart, and my spirit made d
ligent search;" and cxix. 59, "I thought on n
ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies
The nature of a religious fast requires it; for ho
can the deep humiliation therein to be aimed at
otherwise obtained? or what way else can one
fitted to make a confession suitable to such an o
casion? It is observable, that in the fast mentio
ed, Neh. ix., the "reading of the law" went befo
the making of the confession, ver. 3. So the fi
work was to set the looking-glass before their ey
that therein every one might see his foul face. A
the direction given to fallen Israel, in order to a r
covery, Hos. xiv. 2, "Take with you words, a
say," &c., doth plainly bear, that there should,
that case, be solemn serious thinking before solen
prayer.

Now, to assist you in the practice of this part
your work, the following advices are offered:—

First, Read some pertinent passage of holy Scri

ıre, and that with application, as reading your own ɜart and life therein. Such are those passages, hich contain discoveries and confession of sin, as ıa. lix; or lists of sins, or of several sorts of sinners, Rom. i. 29–32, 2 Cor. vi. 9, 10, Gal. v. 19–21, Tim. iii. 1–5, Rev. xxi. 8. Particularly, I re-ɔmmend for this purpose, Ezra ix., Neh. ix., Dan. . Of these, or other scriptures of the like nature, ɔu may read such as you shall judge meet.

Secondly, It will be expedient and useful, in this ıse, to read also the Larger Catechism on the ten ɔmmands, in the answers to the questions, "What required?" and, "What is forbidden?" and espe-ıally the latter. For by reading thereof with ap-ıication to yourself, you will find out your guiltiness many points, which perhaps would not otherwise ɔme into your mind.

Thirdly, This done, apply yourself to think of ɔur sins, in order to your getting a broad and ımbling view of your sinful and wretched case. nd for your help herein, I suggest to you these ings following:—

1. You may compose yourself, what way you find experience to be best for keeping the mind fixed. is a piece of Christian prudence in this case, to spose of every thing so as you may the more adily reach that end, and block up the avenues by ıich impertinent thoughts may make their en-ınce. As, (1.) Because the eyes often betray the art, through a variety of objects, which present emselves to one's view in the light; if you are in house, you may darken it by stopping the light; in the fields, you may lie down on your face, d close your eyes. (2.) If you can by no means

keep your heart at simple thinking, you may spea
to yourself with a low voice, that words may he
to fix the mind unto the thing. These are on
prudential advices, which they that need may us
they that need not may let alone.

2. It will be very profitable to observe son
method and order in thinking of your sins. A co
fused and indeterminate manner of thinking of o
sins doth, in several respects, fall short of an o
derly thought about them. It is true, when t
Spirit of the Lord is carrying on a special work
conviction in the heart of a sinner, the man's si
will of course be readily laid to hand, and "set
order before his eyes," Psa. l. 21. But it is a
other case where one is searching out his sins, wi
an ordinary assistance of the Spirit; herein the
do not duly consult their own interest, who refu
the help of method in the search.

And there is a twofold method or order, whi
may be helpful to you therein; to wit, the order
the time of life, and the order of the ten comman
ments. Both these are natural, and easy to t
meanest capacity.

Thinking on your sins in the order of the tin
of your life, you will thereby get a general view
your own sinfulness, and that throughout yo
whole life. And in this method,

1*st*, You are to consider the sin of your natu
You are to look "unto the rock whence ye a
hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye a
digged," Isa. li. 1. Think what a sinful lump th
wast in thy conception and birth, "shapen in in
quity and conceived in sin," Psa. li. 5; how th
camest into the world, with cords of guilt wreath

bout thy neck, binding thee over to wrath under
ie curse; stripped naked of original righteousness;
ly whole nature corrupted, being the very reverse
the holy nature of God; thy soul in all its facul-
es quite perverted, ready to discover with the first
casion its wrong set, namely, a propensity to evil,
id an aversion to good: and thy body in all its
embers sinful flesh. In consideration whereof
ou mayest well say, with admiration of the divine
tience, "O why did the knees prevent me! Or
hy the breasts that I should suck!"

2*dly*, Then turn your thoughts to the sins of
our childhood. Solomon in his penitentials tells
that childhood and youth are vanity, Eccles. xi.
). Truly, the sins of that early period of our life
e not to be remembered to be laughed at, but
ourned over; and so they will be by true peni-
nts: for they are the early sproutings and buds
corrupt nature, that might have been fatal to us
e we had gone further: Behold how in that period
ou hast "spoken and done evil things as thou
uldst." It is likely that many of these things are
rgotten; but yet you may still search out as many
them as may be matter of deep humiliation to
ou before the Lord. There may be sins of child-
ood, that will make a bleeding wound in a graci-
us heart on every remembrance thereof, even unto
ie dying day.

3*dly*, Then take a view of the sins of your youth.
ob got a moving view of his, when he was come to
good age: Job xiii. 26, "Thou writest bitter
ings against me, and makest me to possess the
iquities of my youth." David's heart bleeds at
ie remembrance of his, crying unto God, "Re-

member not the sins of my youth," Psa. xxv.
Youth is vain, rash, and inconsiderate, and therefo
a dangerous period of life, precipitating some in
such steps as make them to halt all their life aft
—proving fatal to many, and laying up matter
repentance to all. And if the follies of it be n
timely repented of and mourned over by the sinn
they "shall lie down with him in the dust," Job x
11, and present themselves again in full tail, wh
"for all these God will bring him into judgmen
Eccles. xi. 9. Therefore do you take a mournf
view of them, and judge yourselves in time.

4thly, If you are to come to middle age, proce
to the searching out of the sins of that period
your life. In it you cannot miss of matter of de
humiliation; "for man at his best estate is altogeth
vanity," Psa. xxxix. 5. Every period of life
attended with its proper snares and temptatio
And he who, right or wrong, hath made his w
through those of youth, doth but enter into a ne
throng of temptations of another kind, while
enters on the next stage of life, in the which m
often, ere they are aware, "pierce themselv
through with many sorrows," lose themselves in
cloud of cares and business, and, "troubled abo
many things," forget the "one thing needful."

Lastly, If you are advanced into old age, go fo
ward and view your sins in that period. Whatev
infirmities do attend it, the sins of it must
searched out and repented of too; for it will n
excuse a man, before an holy God, that he is
aged sinner. The corruption of nature, the long
it hath kept its ground, is the more hateful, a
will be the more humbling to a gracious soul.

Thus you will have your whole life before you, parcels. And that you may, with the greater stinctness, review any period thereof which you ve fully passed, or of which you have passed a eat part, you may distinguish the same into lesser riods, according to the more notable events, rns, or changes that were in it, and review them parately; as, for instance, the time before you nt to school, by itself; the time of your being it, by itself; and so in other cases.

But for a more full and particular view of your s, do you proceed in the order of the ten commndments. The holy law, considered in its spiuality and vast extent, is the proper means for nd conviction; it is the sinner's looking-glass, ereby to discern the vast multitude of his spots d defilements, in order to his humiliation: Rom. i. 7, "I had not known sin, but by the law: for had not known lust, except the law had said, ou shalt not covet." Wherefore by no means glect, in this review, to go through the ten commndments; and pause upon every one of them, nsidering the duties required therein, and where- you have been guilty by omission of them; and e sins forbidden therein, and wherein you have en guilty by commission of them—guilty in both nds, in thought, word, and deed. This would a proper means to show you the multitude of ur transgressions.

But to proceed in both the one and the other ler jointly, namely, by reviewing each period of ur life separately, in the order of the ten commndments, would, through the divine blessing, be

of the most singular use, for reaching the m
humbling view of your whole life.

Thus far of the second thing suggested for yo
help to think of your sins, in order to a humbli
view of your case. And for your further h
therein,

3. Be sure that in a special manner you set
fore your eyes the signal miscarriages of your li
those sins that have wounded your conscience de
est. I doubt there are but few, if any, of a ten
conscience, who see not some such blots in th
escutcheon—some remarkable trespasses in he
or life that are ready to gall them on every reme
brance, though perhaps known unto none but G
and themselves. Good Eli had such a blot on hi
pointed out to him under the name of "the i
quity which he knoweth," 1 Sam. iii. 13. A
the best of the saints mentioned in Scripture h
something of that nature to humble them. Now,
ever you would be duly humbled in your exerc
of personal fasting, let these, in your review of yo
sins, be brought forth by headmark, and set bef
you in the sight of a holy God, and that althou
they be freely pardoned unto you long ago: for
view of these is most likely to affect you; and p
doned sins, inasmuch as they are pardoned,
humbling in the remembrance of them, Luke
37, 38-47—as Paul's pardoned blasphemy and p
secution were to him, 1 Tim. i. 13.

4. On thinking on your sins, take along with y
the aggravations of them. Represent to yours
the infinite majesty of God, against whom you h
sinned: and as ever you would be duly humbl

ıtertain high and elevated thoughts of the Lord
ır Lawgiver. This will make you to say with
)avid, Psa. li. 4, "Against thee, thee only have
sinned, and done this evil in thy sight;" understand-
ıg by your own experience what he meant thereby.
ı your meditation, set God's way of dealing with
)u, all along from your very birth, over against
)ur way of dealing with him: so shall conviction
e brought home on your conscience, with a pecu-
ır edge; while considering the mercies he hath
eaped on you, the light and warnings he hath
forded you, your guilt will appear of a deepest
ve.

5. Having thus seen your extreme sinfulness,
nsider, in the next place, the just demerit of your
ı, even God's wrath and curse, both in this life
d that which is to come. "For because of these
ings cometh the wrath of God upon the children
disobedience," Eph. v. 6. The law is a looking-
ass for sinners, not only in its commands, but also
its threatenings and curse; showing unto all their
rsed state by nature—to unbelievers, what they are
tually lying under for their sins, and to believers,
hat theirs do deserve. And, therefore, after you
ve, as before directed, gone through all the ten
mmandments, for your conviction and humilia-
)n, do you, for your further humiliation, set your
es upon the threatenings and curse of that holy
w as a covenant of works, and see therein your
st deserving, so as that God may be justified when
speaketh against you, and "clear when he
dgeth," Psa. li. 4. And think with thyself,
w thou shouldst, without peradventure, eternally
rish under his wrath, if he should proceed against

thee according to the law and justice, as he h
actually proceeded against many, for those very s
wherewith thou art chargeable.

6. In this review of your sins, endeavour all alc
that your eye may affect your heart. In vain v
you rake into that dunghill, if suitable affections
emotions of heart be not thereby excited in y
And these suitable affections are, (1.) Hatr
detestation, and abhorrence of sin, Psa. cx
128, Rom. xii. 9. Wherefore, pull the mask fr
off it, remove the paint and varnish that have b
laid over it, that you may see it in its native def
mity, and look on it until your stomach turn
the sometimes sweet morsel. (2.) Grief and sorr
of heart for it, Psa. xxxviii. 18. Let your he
be rent, in consideration of the offence thereby giv
to a gracious God, its contrariety to his holy natu
and will, its dishonouring of his Son, who gave hi
self a sacrifice for sin, and grieving of his Spirit w
sanctifies us. (3.) Holy shame upon the accou
of it, Jer. xxxi. 19. Behold it as a filthy thi
the very reverse of the beauty of holiness, the hc
ness of God expressed in his law; and be cc
founded at the sight. Behold it as a base requi
of divine favours, and blush before him. (4.) Se
loathing, Ezek. xxxvi. 31. Pursue the thoug
of the filthiness of your sin, till you loathe yours
in your own sight, as rendered unclean all over,
abominations of heart and life. (5.) A longing
be rid of sin, the guilt, defilement, prevailing a
indwelling of it. Dwell on the thought of your si
fulness, till your heart, pained and burned the
with, groan out longing desires of deliverance,
Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am, w

all deliver me from the body of this death!" ho will draw this dagger out of my bowels! this ng out of my conscience! this poison out of my sh! who will take this load off my back!

All this would be no more than necessary humi- tion. For it would be the lot of every sinner her in time or in eternity, to be like the fish that boiled in the water, which it some time a-day immed in. But "blessed are ye that weep w," Luke vi. 21. "Woe unto you that laugh w, for ye shall mourn and weep," ver. 25.

Lastly, It will be very necessary that the whole this work be mixed with devout ejaculations. or be sure Satan will be at your right hand, to re- t you, and to mar your work; your heart will be dy to misgive you in it, to stop, and turn aside: erefore press forward in it, lifting your eyes, every w and then, to the LORD for help.

With this review of your own sins, let a view of e public sins of the church and land wherein you e be joined, using the same helps as in your n particular case, which need not be here re- ated.

And in relation to this, I subjoin only three ad- es:

1. Begin always with your own sins, even though e principal cause of your fast be the state of the urch or land. This has been the manner of nts: Isa. vi. 6, "Then said I, Woe is me! for I undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, d I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean s." Dan. ix. 20, "And whilst I was speaking d praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of people Israel." The reason hereof is manifest:

for one will never be duly humbled for the sins
others, who is not, in the first place, so humbl
for his own.

2. Represent public sins to yourself, under su
notions as may tend to excite suitable affections a
emotions of heart in you. Look on them as th
are dishonouring to our gracious God, wounding
ruining to the souls of men, disgraceful to our h
Christian profession, and provoking God to wr
against the land. Hate and loathe them, be asham
of them, and mourn over them, on these accoun
and long for the day of purging them away.

3. See your own sinful part in them, by
means. Bring them home to your own conscien
before the Lord; search out, and see what of t
guilt thereof you are, either directly or indirect
chargeable with, in his sight; and be deeply hu
bled for the same.

Thus far of the review of sin.

Direction VII.

After this review of your sins made, go unto G
by prayer, and make confession of them. And he
confession is to be the chief part of your pray
yea, and if the whole of it almost be confession,
will not be amiss. Certainly extraordinary conf
sion of sin is a great part of the work of a religi
fast, Neh. ix. 3, Dan. ix. 20. And the sole
review, in which one's sins are so particula
searched out, natively issues therein.

For the more profitable management of this c
fession of sin, the following advices are offered:

1. Take no thought of your voice, farther th

keep it from being unseasonably high. For the oice, in itself, is nothing before the heart-searchng God, who regards not the sound of men's roats, but of their heart and affections. "The ue worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit nd in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worip him," John iv. 23. But sometimes there is deceit in the voice, to the beguiling of the soul: s it fared with Ezekiel's hearers, "with the mouth owing much love," Ezek. xxxiii. 31. And one, y an indiscreet management of it, may be fruitssly weakened, and disfitted for continuing at ie work so as need may require. The affections e the best rulers of the voice.

2. Endeavour to bring along into your confesion, and carry along those affections and emotions heart, of which before; namely, hatred and destation of sin, godly sorrow, holy shame, selfathing, and longing to be rid of sin, Psa. xxxviii. 8, "I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry or my sin." When the leper was to cry, "Unclean, nclean," his clothes were to be rent, his head bare, nd there was to be a covering upon his upper lip, ev. xiii. 45. A confessing tongue requires a roken heart, a spirit really weighted with a sense of n. And the marble, that sweats in foul weather, but et is never a whit the softer, shall be an emblem of ie confessing his sin with a hale heart. Yet let one sensible of the hardness of their heart be ereby made to stand aloof from confession, saying, Who will roll away the stone! Let them go forard, and essay it: let them confess their hardness heart, and unfitness to make confession; for so ey may find the stone rolled away to their hand.

3. Be as full as you can in your confession, lay ing all your spiritual sores before the Lord, so far a you know them. One wound concealed from th physician may prove fatal to the patient; and on sin industriously passed over in confession ma prove fatal to the sinner; "for he that covereth h sins shall not prosper," Prov. xxviii. 13. Davi was aware of this: Psa. xxxii. 5, "I acknow ledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have not hid." It fared ill with Ananias and Sapphir for that in another case, they lied unto God, an kept back a part, Acts v. And he is no tru penitent that desires to hide any sweet morsel und his tongue, and is not willing to take shame t himself for every known sin.

4. Be very particular in your confession, openin out your spiritual sores before the Lord: Psa. l 4, "I have done this evil in thy sight;" Joshu vii. 20, "I have sinned; and thus, and thus, hav I done." To confess the several kinds of your sin in general, without descending to particulars, is to superficial work on such an occasion. The part cular abominations of *your* heart and life are raise up in meditation, to be laid before the Lord i humble confession. I suppose you to be at th work in a secret place, where you may freely utt before him what it would not be proper you shoul say in the hearing of others. No doubt, a gre deal of freedom may be used in secret prayer, i narrating of thoughts and actions, with the desig nation of time, place, and persons, so as may ten to one's deeper humiliation, which would not be t edification in social prayer.

Now, in order to your being the more full an

articular in your confession, I would recommend
ıe same method and order to be observed therein,
s in the review of your sins. I believe that, so
oing, you will find the advantage of it. Go orderly
ırough the several periods of your life, and through
l the ten commandments, making your confes-
on; where also you may take in the confession
f public sins, always so as may best tend to the
ırther humiliation of yourself. In a special man-
er, be very particular as to the signal miscarriages
your life, and aggravate your guilt, acknowledging
ıe aggravating circumstances thereof. And unto
ıe confession of your known sins against all the
n commandments, add a humble acknowledgment
a large void and blank to be left for your un-
now sins against every one of them, which you
ın by no means fill up, but the all-knowing God
ın: "for who can understand his errors?"
sa. xix. 12. And, considering the commands
the perfect law as binding you to embrace the
ospel, confess your atrocious guilt in sinning
gainst the remedy of sin, therein revealed, offered,
ıd exhibited unto you.

5. It will be profitable, that, all along through
our confession, you approve of the law, as holy,
ıst, and good, Rom. vii. 12. For as black doth best
ppear when set by white, so sin appears most clearly
its native hue, exceeding sinful, when set over
gainst the pure, holy, just, and good commandment.
s, for example, when you are to confess your sins
gainst the first commandment, you may say to this
ırpose—"Lord, thou commandest me, saying,
Thou shalt have no other *Gods* before me.' I ac-
nowledge this thy command is most just and rea-

sonable in itself, and most good for me. It was tho
alone who made me, thou alone hast preserved m
I never needed another god besides thee, and no
but thou couldst ever do the part of a God to m
Thou didst magnify thy rich grace, in condescendi
to be, in Christ, a God to me, a most wretched cre
ture. Nevertheless, over the belly of this law
love, my duty, and my interest, I have had mar
other gods before thee: I have set up my curse
self in thy room and stead—made the vain wor
my god," &c. And so in other cases.

6. *Lastly*, Let your confession be closed wit
self-condemning, self-emptying, and a look of fait

1*st*, Condemn yourself, as did the returning pr
digal: Luke xv. 18, "Father, I have sinned again
heaven, and before thee;" ver. 19, "And am n
more worthy to be called thy son." As you looke
to the commandments before, and confessed yo
sin, so look now to the threatenings and curse
the law, and confess your just deserving. Rea
there your deserved doom, and pass sentence again
yourself. Nothing is more natural than that no
you call yourself fool and beast, for that you hav
followed the wild-fire of your corrupt inclination
to the ruining of yourself thus in sin and guilt; an
have broken over the hedge, where now you fin
the serpent bitting you. And here,

(1.) Confess you deserve no good, but all evi
in time. If the cause of your fast be some evil yo
are at present smarting under, acknowledge God t
be just, very just in it. If it is some stroke threa
ened, and hanging over your head, confess that yo
well deserve that it should fall on you in its fu
weight. If it is light that you want, confess yo

serve to be left in darkness; or whatever be the ercy you come to make supplication for, acknowdge from the heart that you have forfeited it. rely, in case your uncircumcised heart be humbled, u will accept of the punishment of your iniquity, ev. xxvi. 41. And then if your sin has found you t, you will own the procedure against you to be ghteous and holy; if your broken bones smart, you ill say it is just; if the Lord has turned his former iles into frowns, mixed your comforts with gall d wormwood, souring them so as to set your eth on edge, blasted yonr enjoyments, and squeezl the sap out of them, you will, after confession sin, say from your very heart, "My folly makes so."

(2.) Confess you deserve eternally to perish, and at "it is of the Lord's mercies you are not conmed," Lam. iii. 22; that God might in justice rap you up in the filthy garments of your sin, and st you out of his sight, into the lake burning with re and brimstone, as the fittest place for such a nful lump. Acknowledge yourself to be, in yourlf, a wretched creature, justly under the curse and ndemnatory sentence of the law, having nothing say for yourself at the bar of justice, why it may ot be fully executed against you, a self-condemned, well as a law-condemned sinner, Psa. li. 4. Whatever your state be in the sight of God, it is together just that your libel against yourself be ot concluded without this.

2*dly*, Be emptied of yourself, in a humble and earty acknowledgment of utter inability to help ourself. Having taken a view of the load of sin ing upon you, and laid before the Lord the par-

ticulars of your burden, with the sinking weig
thereof, acknowledge that it is quite beyond yo
power to move it from off you. Say from the hea
"Lord, here is a load of guilt lying upon me, whi
by no doing or suffering of mine can be move
here is a mighty power of sin I am no more ab
to grapple with, than a clild with a giant—a de
weight I can no more remove, than I can remo
a mountain. If thou leave me under it, as just
thou mayest, I perish."

This is true humiliation, where the poor broke
sinner lies at the Lord's feet, sensible that he
bound with ten thousand cords of guilt, but unab
to loose the weakest of them—that his soul is preye
upon, and like to be devoured, by a swarm of livi
lusts, yet unable to kill or shake off any of the
If we are duly humbled, our humiliation will
carried thus far; for it is the ruin of many, th
they see not the absolute need of the blood of Chri
for removing of their guilt, and far less the abs
lute need of his Spirit for breaking of the power
sin in them.

Lastly, Let there be a look of faith out of the lo
dungeon. Look unto God in Christ, and say, "Go
be merciful to me a sinner," Luke xviii. 13; an
"Turn thou me and I shall be turned," Jer. xxx
18. Tell him that, since, according to his holy go
pel, there is yet hope in Israel concerning this thin
you must and will take the benefit of the gosp
proclamation of grace and mercy, and lay hold o
the horns of the altar; and therefore, though yo
weight be heavier than mountains of brass, you d
with humble confidence, at the Father's bidding, la
it wholly over on the blood of his Son the Lo

sus Christ, trusting thereon allenarly for remis-
on of sin, sanctification, and complete salvation.
Now, as to the two directions last mentioned, I
ean not that what is proposed in either of them
ust needs be done all at once, without intermis-
on. You may use them as you are best able to
ach them. It is not very likely that those who
ent one-fourth of the day in confessing and wor-
ipping, Neh. ix. 3, did make but one confession
ntinued without intermission: so you may make
ch intermissions in either or both of them as you
ıd necessary. Christian prudence must direct in
e matter, to use the means so as may best con-
ıce to the end.

Direction VIII.

After confession of sin, apply yourself to the duty
personal covenanting, explicit entering into, or re-
wing covenant with God, by taking hold of God's
venant of grace in express words. That this is a
cessary part of the work of a personal fast may
gathered from Jer. l. 4, and Neh. ix. 38, both
ed before. And it is clear from the nature of
e thing; for to what purpose shall men lay open
eir wounds before the Physician of souls, if they
ind not to put themselves in his hand for cure, in
e way of the covenant? or how can they pretend
mourn for sin, if they are not to enter on the
ay of reformation? A time of personal fasting is
time for the runaway to return to his duty, and
set matters right again that were put wrong by
rning aside from God and his way. And one

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unwilling to enter into covenant with God can be sincere in his confession of sin, and mourn over it, whatever he may pretend.

For the right managing of this duty of perso covenanting, these three following advices are fered :—

1. See that you understand, and rightly take the covenant, the covenant of grace, together w the way and manner of a sinner's personal enter into it, and being inflated in it unto salvation; which are to be learned from the Holy Script alone, as being revealed in it only. Mistakes a misapprehensions of these things may be of v bad consequences in the practice of this duty, which cause men ought earnestly to pray that G would, by his own word and Spirit, show them covenant, according to the promise, Psa. xxv. 1

According to the Scripture, the covenant, name the covenant of grace for life and salvation, is left unto you to make, in whole nor in part, by p posing and condescending on terms thereof, as party contractor: it is made already, complet made and concluded in all the articles there whether conditionary or promissory, and that tween God, the party contractor on heaven's si and Christ as Mediator and second Adam, party contractor on lost man's side. And it is gistered in the sacred records, the Holy Scriptu And you are invited into the fellowship of it: P lxxxix. 3, "I have made a covenant with chosen, David my servant;" 1 Cor. xv. 45, "T last Adam;" 1 John i. 3, "That which we h seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye m

so have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

The condition of it is Christ's fulfilling all righteousness in the name of his spiritual seed: Matt. i. 15, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." This righteousness was stated from the broken covenant of works, and that in three things, namely, perfect holiness of nature, righteousness of life, and satisfaction for sin—all which Christ did fulfil, in his being born perfectly holy, living perfectly righteous, and making complete satisfaction by his death and sufferings. And thus the condition of the covenant, on which is founded the right and claim to the promises of it, is fulfilled already in your hand.

The promise of it, respecting lost sinners, is the promise of eternal life in its full latitude, comprehending all things necessary to make a sinner holy and happy, that God in Christ will be their God, and they shall be his people: Tit. i. 2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" Heb. viii. 10, "This is the covenant: I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." And it is begun to be fulfilled to all who have taken hold of the covenant, and is ready to be fulfilled unto all who shall yet take hold thereof.

This covenant is the plan laid by Infinite Wisdom for the salvation of lost sinners, upon which they may safely venture themselves, for time and eternity, as upon a bottom infallibly sure. Isa. lv. 3, I will make an everlasting covenant with you (Heb.—I will cut to you an everlasting covenant),

even the sure mercies of David." 1 Cor. i. 23–2
"We preach Christ—Christ the power of G
and the wisdom of God." It is Heaven's device
repairing the loss we sustained by Adam's fa
whereby we become unholy and miserable, lying
ignorance which we could not cure, under guilt a
the curse which we could not remove, and und
bondage to sin and Satan, which we could n
break. Ver. 30, "But of him are ye in Chr
Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, a
righteousness, and sanctification, and redemptio

The great design of it is to exalt the free gra
of God in the salvation of sinners—to show there
the exceeding riches of his grace to them in Chri
It is a plan laid for cutting off all ground of boa
ing from the creature—to make Christ all, and t
creature nothing in its own salvation, as being i
debted to free grace for the whole thereof: Ep
i. 6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace
chap. ii. 7, "That he might show the exceedi
riches of his grace, in his kindness towards
through Christ Jesus;" ver. 9, "Not of wor
lest any man should boast." It is much like u
a contract of marriage, devised and drawn by
wealthy and wise physician, of his own proper moti
alone, between himself and a poor woman drown
in debt, weak and witless, and withal overrun w
loathsome sores, rendering her incapable to do ar
thing, whether for her own relief or for his servic
and this upon a design to have her wholly indebt
to him for her relief, the payment of her debt, t
management of her person, and her recovery
action and business.

This covenant is offered and exhibited to you

he gospel, as really as that contract drawn and sign-
d by the physician, would be offered and exhibited
o the woman, if he should come and present it to
er, for her acceptance. Rom. x. 6, "Say not in
hine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is,
o bring Christ down from above);" ver. 7, "Or,
Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring
p Christ again from the dead);" ver. 8, "But
hat saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy
outh, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith
hich we preach." So that the righteousness of
hrist, to wit, the holiness of nature wherewith he
as born, and which he retained unspotted till
eath, the righteousness of his life, and his satisfac-
on made by his sufferings, is in that word freely
ffered and exhibited to you, as the fulfilled condi-
on of the covenant, being therein revealed unto
ith. Rom. i. 17. Gr.; as also, the promise of
ernal life, as the promise of the covenant to be
ulfilled, being therein left you, Heb. iv. 1.

Hence it appears, that the duty of personal cove-
anting is much mistaken and mismanaged, where
ne party, apprehending that God, in the word, de-
ares himself willing to be his God, upon certain
rms, to be by him performed, different from ac-
epting God's full and free covenant of promise,
oes accordingly make a covenant with God, solemn-
taking him for his God upon these terms, pro-
ising and vowing, that if God will be his God,
ardon his sins, be at peace with him, and save his
ul, he will, for his part, be one of his people, and
ithfully serve him all the days of his life, watching
gainst all known sin, and performing every known
uty. This is just as if the woman, in the case be-

fore put, should tell him who offers her the contra
that she is content to take him for her husban
upon certain terms, particularly, that if he will
her husband, and do the duty of a husband to h
she will, for her part, be a faithful wife to him,
the days of her life, doing all that she is able to
for paying off her debt, managing herself and l
household to the best of her skill, and taking
pains on her sores, to make her lovely in his eye
the which being quite contrary to the design a
end of that unusual kind of contract, which is
have the wife wholly indebted to the husband f
all, doth alter the nature of the proposal, and wou
quite mar the surprising match, which was in a f
way to be carried on.

But likeas in that case nothing remains for t
woman to do, to entitle her to the benefit of t
contract, but believing it to be a real and seriou
not a ludicrous deed, to sign her acceptance; whi
signing with the hand is necessary, because her b
lief of the reality of the offered contract, and trus
ing to it accordingly, being inward acts of the so
cannot be known among men but by a prop
external sign; even so all that remains for you
instate you savingly in God's covenant of gra
offered and exhibited to you in the gospel, is
take hold of it, Isa. lvi. 4.

And to the end that, in your aiming to take ho
of the covenant, you may not be at a loss, fearin
that you may miss any part or parts thereof, lyi
scattered through the blessed Bible, know th
Jesus Christ, the second Adam, head of the cov
nant, is by his father "given for a covenant" to yo
Isa. xlix. 8. So that you have the whole cov

ant in him; and you take hold of it, by taking old of him offered and exhibited to you in the ee promise of the gospel.

And this is done by faith, or believing on his ame, according to John i. 12, "As many as re-ived him, to them gave he power to become the ons of God, even to them that believe on his ame." Wherefore, by believing on the name of hrist, we take hold of the covenant, and are in-ated in it unto salvation. And God hath made elieving to be the means of instating sinners per-onally and savingly in the covenant, in consonancy ith the great design and end thereof, declared in ie word, and of which before. Rom. iv. 16, Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." om. iii. 27, "Where is boasting then? It is ex-luded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by ie law of faith."

Now to believe on the name of Christ, is to be-eve or credit the free promise of the gospel, with pplication to yourself, and accordingly to trust on im as the Saviour of the world, and your Saviour, n whom God will be your God, and you shall be ne of his people, unto your salvation from sin and om wrath. Mark i. 15, "Believe the gospel;" al. iii. 12, "The hearing of faith;" 1 Thess. i. 5, Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but lso in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much ssurance;" 1 Cor ii. 4, "In demonstration of the pirit, and of power; ver. 5. "That your faith hould stand—in the power of God;" and Acts vi. 31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, nd thou shalt be saved;" Psa. xxxvii. 40, "He hall save them, because they trust in him;"

Psa. ii. 12, "Blessed are all they that put th trust in him." Acts xv. 11, "We believe, th through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." This believing, or crediting t word, and trusting on the person, of Christ, is th which of all things is farthest removed from t nature of a work, according to the Scripture use that word; and therefore is the most agreeab means of saving entrance into that covenant, whi is of faith, that it might be by grace; not of work lest any man should boast.

A sinner being by this believing on Christ unit to him as the head of the covenant, is thereby pe sonally entered into the covenant, so as, in right, to have a saving interest in the conditio promise, and privileges thereof, unto his etern salvation; even as becoming, through natural gene ation, children of Adam, the head of the covena of works, we are personally entered into that cov nant, so as to be involved in the guilt of the brea of it, and laid under the curse thereof. Rom. v. 1 "For as by one man's disobedience many we made sinners; so by the obedience of one sh many be made righteous." John x. 9, "I am t door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved Eph. iii. 17, "That Christ may dwell in your hear by faith."

Upon this believing on the name of Christ, credi ing and trusting in manner said before, do nece sarily follow an absolute consent to take him f our husband, head, and Lord, and God in him f our God, and unconditional resignation of ourselv unto him, soul and body, to be his only, wholl and for ever, with an illimited renunciation of a

ther for him, even as in the case before put, upon ne woman's believing the reality of the offer of the ntract of marriage between the physician and her, d accordingly, that he will indeed be her husband, llows her consenting to take him for her husband, ead, and lord, giving up herself unto him, and re- uncing all other for him, absolutely, uncondition- ly, without limitation or reservation; the which e can never do till once she believe that. And us to the word of grace, the covenant offered and hibited in the gospel, "I will be to them a God, d they shall be to me a people," the believing soul nswereth, as an echo, "My beloved is mine, and I n his," Cant. ii. 16.

2. Having understood the covenant aright, toge- er with the way and manner of being personally nd savingly entered into it, examine yourselves ent it impartially, as ever you would make sure ork in this weighty matter. Inquire into your sense your need of the covenant, your belief of it, and e disposition of your heart towards it. And on these heads, pose yourself with these or the e questions:

"In the *first* place, O my soul, do I verily be- ve that I was lost, ruined and undone in Adam, his breaking of the covenant of works; and that have ruined myself more and more, by my actual ansgressions? Do I believe that I am by nature holly corrupt and sinful, averse to good, prone to il, and justly laid under the curse, binding me er to the revenging wrath of God for time and ernity? Am I convinced that I am utterly unable help myself, in whole or in part, out of this gulf sin and misery into which I am plunged, and

that I must needs perish under the guilt, dominio and pollution of my sin, without being justified sanctified, for ever, if I be not relieved by Heave own hand?

"*Next*, O my soul! do I believe that there is covenant of grace, for the relief of lost sinners, esta lished between GOD the Father, and his SON Jes Christ, as second Adam, wherein, upon conditi of Christ's fulfilling all righteousness as a pub person, is promised eternal life to them, that G in Christ will be their God, and they shall be l people? Do I believe that this is the plan a device of Heaven, for life and salvation to lost sinne for making of them holy, and for making of the happy? Do I believe that Jesus Christ hath, his holy birth, righteous life, satisfactory death a sufferings, performed that condition of the covena and thereby purchased and secured the benefit the in promised for poor sinners? Then, do I inde believe that this covenant already fulfilled in condition, and certainly to be fulfilled in its pr mise, is in CHRIST crucified, really offered and e hibited to me in the gospel; and that I am called the fellowship of it in him? And then, do I ver believe on the name of Christ crucified, offered, a exhibited to me, as the Great High Priest, who, the sacrifice of himself, hath made the atoneme paid the ranson, and brought in everlasting righ ousness for poor sinners? That is to say, (1.) C I credit his word of grace to me, that he with l righteousness will be mine, and, in him, God w be my God, and I shall be one of his people? (2 And can I, as on a safe bottom, trust on him as r Saviour, that in him it shall be so unto me, to r

eternal life and salvation, to the making of me holy nd happy?

"*Finally*, O my soul! how do I like the covenant? Am I pleased with the frame of it, whereby Christ was from eternity appointed, not only the Priest of the covenant, to fulfil the condition of it, ut also the Prophet and the King thereof, to administer it! And can I find in my heart to acquiesce in that device for salvation, as all my salvation, and all my desire, for making me holy and appy? Am I content to take Christ the SON of God, for my only PRIEST, Surety, Intercessor, and Redeemer; and in him, the FATHER for my Father, nd the HOLY GHOST for my Sanctifier; GOD in CHRIST for my God? Am I willing wholly to resign myself, soul and body, to him, to be saved by his blood alone, renouncing all confidence in my own righteousness, doings, and sufferings? Am I ontent to take him for my Head and Husband? Particularly, am I content to take him for my alone PROPHET, Oracle, and Guide—to resign and give up myself wholly to him, to be taught, guided, and directed in all things, by his Word and Spirit, renouncing mine own wisdom, and the wisdom of this world? Am I content to take him for my alone KING and Lord; to resign myself wholly, soul and body, unto him, to be rescued by his power from sin, death, the devil, and this present evil world, for to serve him for ever, and to be ruled by the will of his command, as to my duty, and the will of his providence, as to my lot? And am I heartily content to part with, and renounce every known SIN, and particularly that which most easily besets me, together with my own foolish will, and all other

lords besides him, without reservation, and withou
exception, against his cross? And am I really, as i
his sight, willing to have discovered unto me, an
upon discovery to part with every sin in me, that
know not?"

Now, howbeit all doubting as to such of thes
points as are points of faith, and every the least de
gree of aversion to the consenting, resignation, an
renunciation, is sin before the Lord, and needs t
be purged away by the Redeemer's blood; yet the
ought not to stop your proceeding, unless they b
predominant over your belief and willingness in th
matter. Mark ix. 24, "Lord, I believe, help thou
mine unbelief." Gal. v. 17, "The flesh lusteth
against the Spirit;—so that ye cannot do the thing
that ye would," namely, in that perfection that y
fain would do them. But, indeed, if they be pre
dominant, keeping your mind and heart quite un
settled, and wavering like a wave of the sea, tha
hath nothing to fix it, one cannot advise proceedin
in that case; for that would be to lie unto the Lord
with a witness: Jas. i. 6, "For he that waveretl
is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind an
tossed." Ver. 7, "For let not that man think
that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." How
beit, a sincere belief and willingness in these points
may, indeed, waver like a ship at anchor, which i
still held fast in the place, notwithstanding of al
its wavering therein. And one may take hold o
God's covenant of grace, unto salvation, even with
a trembling hand.

3. *Lastly*, Having in your self-examination satis
fied your conscience as to these points, go unto God
by prayer, and therein solemnly and in express words

ke hold of the covenant—the which may be done
words to this purpose:

"O LORD, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus
rist, I confess I am by nature a lost sinner, wholly
rrupted, and laid under the curse, in Adam,
rough the breach of the covenant of works, and
ve ruined myself more and more by my actual
nsgressions innumerable. I am convinced, and
acknowledge, that I am utterly unable to help
yself in whole or in part, out of this gulf of sin
d misery into which I am plunged, and that it
beyond the reach of the whole creation to help
e out of it; so that I must inevitably perish for
er, if thine own strong hand do not make help
me.

"But forasmuch as there is a covenant of grace
life and salvation to lost sinners, established
tween THEE and thine own SON, the Lord Jesus
rist, as second Adam, wherein, upon condition
his fulfilling all righteousness, which is now per-
rmed in his having been born perfectly holy, lived
ogether righteously, and made perfect satisfaction
justice by his death and sufferings, thou hast pro-
ised that thou wilt be their God, and they shall
thy people, to the making of them holy and happy
ever; and that this covenant is in CHRIST the
ad thereof, offered and exhibited to me in thy
spel; and thou callest me into the fellowship of
in him. Therefore, upon the warrant of, and in
edience to, thy command and call, I, a poor
rishing sinner, do take hold of that covenant, for
e and salvation to me, believing on the name of
rist crucified, the head thereof, offered and ex-
bited to me as the Great High Priest, who, by the

sacrifice of himself, hath made atonement, paid th ransom, and brought in everlasting righteousne for poor sinners. I credit his word of grace to m and accordingly trust on him, that he with h righteousness will be mine, and that in and throug him God will be my God, and I shall be one of h people, to the making of me holy and happy for eve

"O my God, I do by thy grace acquiesce in th covenant, as all my salvation and all my desir With my whole heart and soul, the Son incarna is my only Priest, my Surety, my Intercessor, ar my Redeemer; and, in him, the FATHER, n FATHER, the HOLY GHOST my SANCTIFIER; G in CHRIST my GOD. I resign myself soul ar body to him, to be saved by his blood alone, r nouncing all confidence in mine own righteousnes doings, and sufferings. With my whole heart ar soul, he is my HEAD and HUSBAND, and I a his only, wholly, and for ever—to live by him, him, and for him. I take him for my alone Pr phet, Oracle, and Guide—give up myself whol to him, to be taught, guided, and directed, in a things, by his Word and Spirit—and renounce mi own wisdom, and the wisdom of this world. H is, with my heart's consent, my alone King ar Lord. And I resign myself wholly, soul and bod unto him, to be rescued by the strength of h mighty hand, from sin, death, the devil, and th present evil world, for to serve him for ever, ar to be ruled by the will of his command as to n duty, and the will of his providence as to my lo I am with my whole heart content (Lord, tho knowest) to part with, and do renounce eve known sin, lust, or idol, and particularly my ———

e sin which most easily besets me; together with
y own foolish will, and all other lords besides him,
thout reservation, and without exception, against
s cross;—protesting in thy sight, O Lord, that I
n, through grace, willing to have discovered unto
e, and upon discovery to part with every sin in me
at I know not; and that the doubtings and averse-
ss of heart mixed with this my accepting of thy
venant, are what I allow not; and that notwith-
nding thereof, I look to be accepted of thee here-
, in the Beloved, thine only Son and my Saviour,
rging away these, with all my other sins, by his
ecious blood.

"Let it be recorded in heaven, O Lord, and let
——, and whatever is here present, bear witness,
at I, though most unworthy, have this day here
ken hold of, and come into thy covenant of grace,
fered and exhibited to me in thy gospel; and that
ou art my God in the tenor of that covenant, and
am one of thy people, from henceforth and for
er."

Direction IX.

After covenanting with God, set yourself to ply
e throne of grace by prayer and supplication, with
ference to what is the particular cause or causes
your fast. This is surely the proper order; for
en is one in best case to make special requests
nto the Lord, when by application of the blood of
rist in taking hold of the covenant, his con-
ience is purged; whereas if one falls to that work
fore this, he cannot have the confidence towards
od necessary in this case, 1 John iii. 20, 21.

And for the right managing hereof, the follo
ing advices are offered:—

1*st*, As it is fit you should, the night before, co
descend in your own mind on the causes of yc
fast, so now again you should review them, par
that the things which you are to lay before t
Lord in prayer and supplication, may be rea
before you, and partly that you may be du
affected therewith.

2*dly*, Then go to prayer, and present your pe
tions anent them to your covenanted God. A
pray again and again on these heads, as you sh
find your case to require; for the time is set apa
for that very end, that you may have opportuni
to wrestle with God in prayers and supplicatio
thereanent.

3*dly*, In these prayers, let there be a holy mixtu
of humility suitable to our unworthiness, of ferven
suitable to our pressing needs, and of confidence
God suitable to the access unto him allowed us
the covenant; the which are the special ingredier
in prevailing prayer.

1. In all your addresses to the throne of grac
continue a humble supplicant, not forgetting, b
maintaining a due sense of your sinfulness, vilene
and unworthiness of the mercies you make suit fo
"Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest cor
under my roof," saith the Centurion, Matt. viii.
"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercie
saith Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10. Due humility w
oblige you to look on yourself as absolutely unworth
of spiritual mercies, though in the mean time yc
see an absolute need of them; it will keep you fro
being peremptory in the matter of temporal mercie

nd dispose you to a holy submission unto the will f God therein; and it will engage you, in matters f light, to lay yourself fairly open to the divine letermination.

If, in this last case, your own inclination do sway ou to any one side, yet be sure to have no regard o it before the Lord, but come unto him, as it were n an equipoise, to be cast to what side he will. uch are "the meek will he guide in judgment; the neek will he teach his way," Psa. xxv. 9. Unair dealing with God in this case is exceeding sinful nd dangerous. They who venture on it are there- n dissemblers, and will readily throw off their mask, the answer of God fall not in with the side that neir inclination is on; they will repel it; they will ot see it; but will take their own way, notwithstanding, to the provoking of the eyes of his glory; hereof we have a remarkable instance in the Jews onsulting God as to what they should do, while n the mean time they were aforehand resolved hat to do, being bent to go to Egypt, Jer. xli. 17, lii. 1–6, 19, 20, xliii. 2–7. Such dealing with od, in the matter of light, sometimes provokes im to give men their will with a vengeance. Thus alaam got an answer from God, plainly notiing to him, that he should not go with Balak's essengers, Numb. xxii. 12. But that answer not uiting his inclinations, which were towards "the ages of unrighteousness," 2 Peter ii. 15, he went ack for another answer more agreeable thereto, and t wrath he got it, verses 19–22.

2. Be fervent in your addresses, "labouring fernently in prayers," Col. iv. 12. On such occasions ie body is afflicted that the spirit may be come the

more earnest in supplication; the ordinary weigh of worldly incumbrances is laid aside, that the sou may the more readily take wing and mount heaven ward. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteou man availeth much," Jas. v. 16.

3. Pray with confidence in God, through Jesu Christ, believing, not doubtingly and distrustfully Matt. xxi. 22, "And all things whatsoever y shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Whether your petitions be for temporal or spiritua mercies, present them to the Father in the name c Christ, according to the promises of the covenan relative thereto, believing and being confident o the ground of the merit and intercession of the Me diator, that God will do the best in your case, tha your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, an that what is for his glory and your good shall no be withheld from you, Psa. lxxxv. 12, 1 Cor. xv 58, Psa. lxxxiv. 11.

4. In the intervals of prayer, give yourself t some godly exercise, such as singing of psalms, read ing of the Word, or meditation. And, particularly if you be seeking light into a matter, you may ente on thinking about it, in order to your clearin therein, weighing circumstances, with dependenc on the Lord, according to the promise, Psa. xxxi 8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the wa which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mir eye." And specially, if you are seeking light int the state of your soul, here is a favourable nick c time for it—the marks and evidences of a graciou state being, upon the back of covenanting with God in a fair way to be discovered, to the satisfaction c the sincere soul.

5. *Lastly*, Lay no weight on the quantity of your prayers; that is to say, how long or how many they are. These things avail nothing with God, by whom prayers are not measured, but weighed. And what makes the weight in them is the faith, fervency, and humility therein; so that one of those groanings mentioned, Rom. viii. 26, will down-weigh a whole day's prayers, in which these things are wanting. Do you labour to get near God in prayer, and press forward to obtain that.

Direction X.

As you have ability and opportunity, let works of charity and mercy be joined with your fast; doing them, whether in the time of it, or before it, or after it. Isa. lviii. 6, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen?" verse 7, "To deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" Let the poor be gainers by your fast; for it is the promise of God that "he that watereth, shall be watered also himself," Prov. xi. 25. And one's finding mercy with God, natively issues a merciful disposition towards one's fellow-creatures, Matt. xviii. 33, Eph. iv. 32.

Direction XI.

Before you give over your work, you will do well to consider seriously, that you are now the Lord's and no more your own; and forasmuch as your covenanting with God supposeth that you are resolved

to reform, and to walk more closely with God, lay down resolutions, in the strength of your covenanted God, to watch. And by all means forget not to consider what are those things whereby in a special manner your spiritual condition had formerly been worsted, and by what means it may be kept right; and sincerely resolve to eschew the one and pursue the other, that so what gaps have been in your conversation may be filled up, whereby it will appear that by your fast you have been set forward in your Christian course. And, withal, review your failures in all the parts of the exercise you have now been employed in.

Direction XII.

You may conclude the work with prayer, wherein you may humbly confess your failures in the management of this duty, and apply anew to the blood of sprinkling for purging them away, avouch your covenant-interest in God, and his in you, and lay the causes of your fast again before him, and solemnly leave them on him. The laying over a matter on the Lord believingly, in prayer, gives great ease to a burdened heart: it turns a fast sometimes into a spiritual feast. When Hannah had done so with her case, "she went away and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad," 1 Sam. i. 18. And lay over yourself upon him, for the grace of the covenant, to subdue your corruptions, bear you up against temptations, and carry on your resolutions, that you may go out into the world again, in the faith of his grace sufficient for you in all exigencies.

Direction XIII.

When the work is over, take heed to your spirit. And,

1. Beware of spiritual pride. Do not value yourself upon the account of the work done, as they did who said, "Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?" Isa. lviii. 3. The opinion of the merit of good works is what the heart of man easily goes off into, by its natural bias; and there is so much of the old man in the best, that they are apt to think highly of their religious performances and services. Wherefore be on your guard, particularly on that side, and consider the perfection required by the holy law, and keep in view your own mismanagements, so as when you shall have done all those things you may be obliged to say, "We are unprofitable servants," Luke xvii. 10.

2. Beware of carnal security. Saints sometimes fall asleep quickly after a full meal of spiritual enjoyment, as it fared with the spouse, Cant. v. 1, 2. And Satan watching the advantage, rallies his scattered forces, and with his wounded men burns the city. So it comes to pass, that, according to Solomon's observe, Prov. xii. 27, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." What was gathered with much pains is lost through unwatchfulness, ere he gets the use of it.

3. *Lastly*, Beware of forgetting the causes of your fast; but in your ordinary addresses to God remember them, and wait on for an answer. Psa. v. 3, "I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." Prayers may be accepted, and yet not presently answered. In which case, it is necessary that with patience we wait for a return from heaven,

meanwhile using the appointed means for obtaining the end. The neglecting hereof may provoke the Lord to continue the symptoms of his anger, or stroke of his hand, which otherwise might sooner be removed, and to leave one perplexed and embarrassed in matters wherein light is needed.

But in your waiting for light, whatever the Sovereign Lord may do, do not you look for impressions, far less for voices, nor extraordinary revelation in any manner of way, to discover your duty in particular cases, 2 Pet. i. 18, 19. But, having laid yourself fairly open to the divine determination, and made humble and earnest supplication unto God for light in your particular case, believe that you shall be guided, taught, and directed by him, according to his promise, Psa. xxv. 9, Prov. iii. 6. And then, in dependence on the Lord, weigh the matter and circumstantiate case in the balance of sanctified reason, according to the general directions of the Word, such as Philippians iv. 8, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." And carefully observe the conduct and motions of providence with reference to it, still comparing them with the Word. And you will find that he will guide you with his eye, according to the promise, Psa. xxxii. 8. And with respect thereto, you may put up that petition unto him in faith, Psa. lxxxvi. 17, "Shew me a token for good."

Thus far of personal fasting and humiliation.

CHAPTER III.

OF FAMILY FASTING AND HUMILIATION IN PARTICULAR.

WHEREIN the substance of this duty, which is the same in all religious fasts whatsoever, doth consist, is already declared. And there being many things common to family fasts, with personal ones of which we have treated at large, it remains only to add here some few things peculiar to family fastings. And,

First, As to the divine warrant for it, one may be satisfied upon these grounds:—

1. Forasmuch as every Christian family ought to be a church, Rom. xvi. 5, to receive all ordinances appointed of God, and competent to them in their family capacity; and that religious fasting is an ordinance of divine appointment, in the nature whereof there is nothing to hinder its being performed by a family in their family capacity, it is evident that family fasting and humiliation is a part of family worship; namely, an extraordinary part thereof, to be occasionally performed. Accordingly, it is promised, as an effect of the pouring out of the spirit, Zech. xii. 12, "The land shall mourn, every family apart." We have also a plain instance of it, in Esther's family, on the occasion of the mischievous decree against the Jews, procured by Haman, Esther iv. 16, "I also and my maidens will fast likewise." And the fasting of the Jews, on the same occasion, in every province whithersoever that decree came, mentioned ver. 3, seems to have been

mostly, if not altogether, of the same kind, to wi family fasting; not only in respect of their cir cumstances in these provinces where they wer dispersed, Chap. iii. 8, but also, that the thank giving for their deliverance was appointed to b "kept throughout every family," Chap. ix. 28.

2. The ground upon which the duty of fastin and humiliation is bound upon public worshippin societies and upon particular persons, takes plac also in the case of families. If national, congrega tional, and personal sins to be mourned over, judg ments to be deprecated, and mercies to be sough do found a call to a nation, congregation, or perso respectively, to humble themselves with fasting can there be any reason assigned why the sam should not hold in like manner in the case of fami lies? Surely, as there are times wherein it goe ill with a land, or with a particular congregatio or person, so there are times wherein it goes ev with one's house, 1 Chron. vii. 23, in respect c special family sins or strokes, and in which the are special family mercies needed. And familie are obliged to the using of the same appointe means for getting rid of the one, and obtaining th other, as other worshipping societies and particula persons are, in their respective cases. And wher the concern of members of a family is commo although it be not equal, all of them ought, i reason, to take part of the burden.

3. *Lastly*, The promise made to joint praye hath weight here: Matt. xviii. 19, "If two of yo shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that the shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Fathe which is in heaven." Ver. 20, "For where two c

three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It is certain there is such a thing as extraordinary prayer, which hath a share in the beneft of this promise; and if the Lord is pleased to lay such a weight on some of his people, their agreeing together to ask a thing of him, or their sounding together, as the word properly signifies, it is not to be doubted, but extraordinary prayer in families, upon some special occasions, is both required by him, and acceptable unto him through Jesus Christ his Son.

Secondly, As for a providential call to family fasting and humiliation: by what is said before, for clearing of one's call to personal fasting, it may be judged of and discerned—the circumstances of the family being duly considered, and what the conduct of providence towards it appears to point unto. The case of others, in whom the family hath a particular concern, especially the case of the church, may found a call to family fasting, as is clear from the practice of Esther with her maids, Esth. iv. 16. And so may the private case of the family itself, whether in respect of family sins, family strokes threatened or inflicted, or some special family mercies to be desired. And since the exemplification of these general heads, in one's private case, made in the second section of the foregoing chapter, may, without difficulty, be accommodated to the case of one's family, by persons of the meanest capacity disposed to consider them, it is not necessary here to descend to particulars again.

Lastly, For directions towards family fasting, there are but few that need to be added unto those given before, in the case of personal fasting. It is

plain, from the nature of the thing, that the externa ordering and management of this matter belongs t the head of the family; and he or she is discreetl to choose and appoint the time and place, wherei the family may perform the duty with least disturb ance, and to see that all be done decently and i order. And,

1. Let the head of the family, some competen time, at least the night before, give notice to them that such a time is set apart for, and to be spent in that exercise; and withal show them the causes o it, and exhort them to stir up themselves to th duties of such a solemn approach unto God. Com mon prudence will direct, as well as Christian dut doth oblige, the husband to consult his wife afore hand, as to the fixing of the time to be set apart i the family for that extraordinary piece of devotion

2. In the morning, let each member of the famil go apart by himself into some secret place, and ther spend some time in reviewing, confessing, covenant ing, praying, and supplicating, as directed in the cas of personal fasting, so far as he can overtake them The more conscientiously this secret work is ma naged, it will readily fare the better with the family when met together.

3. Let the head of the family, having taken t himself, and allowed to them a competent time fo their extraordinary secret devotions, thereafter cal them together. And the family being convened, h may again, if need be, lay before them the causes o their fast, with suitable exhortations and encourage ments for exciting them unto the duty. And, afte calling on God for the aid of his Holy Spirit, let hin sing with them some psalm or part of a psalm, suit

able to such an occasion, such as Psa. lxxx. 1, and downwards; Psa. xxxix. 6, to the end; Psa. li. 1, and downwards; read before them some pertinent passage of Scripture, such as those mentioned in the sixth Direction of the preceding chapter, and then pray with them. After prayer made by the head of the family, let the mistress of the family, and such others as he judgeth fit, pray one after another. It is very desirable that each member of the family, being through grace fit to be employed, do take a part in that work. In the intervals of prayer, there may be singing, reading, or conference, as may be found most expedient.

4. It is fit that, in these prayers, there be extraordinary confession of sin, as particular as may be expedient, together with profession of repentance, and hearty sorrow for sin, and of unfeigned desire to return unto God, and unto the duties of a Christian life; and then, fervent and earnest supplications, upon the matters that are the peculiar causes of the fast.

5. It is proper that the concluding prayer be made by the head of the family, and that therein he resume the confessions, professions, and supplications on the matters of the fast, humbly acknowledge their failures in the management of the work, and profess their looking for pardon and acceptance through the blood of Jesus Christ alone, and also for grace to walk in the ways of new obedience, through the same atoning blood. Then the joint exercise may be closed, with singing some part of a psalm, such as Psalm xc. 13, to the end, Psalm xxxv. 6, to the end, or Psalm lxix. 30, and downward.

6. *Lastly*, The joint exercise of the family being over, let each of them go apart by himself again and spend some time in a review of what they have been employed in, and in secret prayer—the which is but a suitable conclusion to such solemn work. And family reformation ought to follow hereupon; every member of the family watching over himself, and all of them watching one over another; that by their holy walking, in peace and unity, and a conscientious performance of their relative duties, it may appear that they have been sincere and upright before the Lord in their fast.

THE CONCLUSION.

And now, to recommend the practice of these duties to persons and families, these five things are offered in favour thereof; namely, that the practice of them is a proper means—1. To bring strangers to religion acquainted with it. 2. To recover backsliders. 3. To prevent relapses. 4. To prepare for a time of trial. And, *lastly*, To get matters clear for eternity.

First, The practice of personal and family fasting and humiliation is a proper means to bring strangers to religion acquainted with it, that those who have not yet dipt into practical religion, may begin to enter into it. The work of conversion unto God begins at solemn serious consideration of one's own spiritual state and case, the which, if sinners could once be brought unto, there would be some hope of them, as of the prodigal, when "he came to himself," Luke xv. 17. And if they would set them-

selves to the duty of personal fasting, and masters of families would now and then use family fasts, they might at length be brought to consider of their spiritual state and case. Wherefore,

1. Ye who are young, and have not yet dipt into the heart of religion, this Memorial is for you. It is presumed ye were baptized in your infancy, and that now ye are come to the years of discretion; but have you ever, as yet, taken a solemn deliberate view of your lost and undone state by nature, under sin and the curse, and of the remedy provided for you in Jesus Christ? And have you ever, as yet, personally entered into covenant with God, by taking hold of his covenant of grace? You eat, you drink, you sleep, you work, you play or divert yourselves—and so do young beasts too, the which, when they are dead, are done; but you have an immortal soul, that must eternally live happy in heaven or miserable in hell. It may be, you say your prayers too; but have you, as yet, personally renounced the devil, the vain world, and the flesh? You cannot but see that death seizeth some as young and sprightly as you are, and you know not how soon God may call you off;—have you then laid your measures for eternity? Alas! you are heedlessly running about the devil's trap, playing yourselves about the pit's mouth; and should your foot slip now, you are undone for ever. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways."

2. Careless sinners, careless about the concerns of the other world, whatever your age or years be, this Memorial is for you. "Ye careless ones, strip ye, and make ye bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins," Isa. xxxii. 11. What is your religion? Is

is not like the foam on the water, no substance in it? What is your life and conversation? See your own picture, Jer. ii. 24, "A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure." What condition is your soul in? The emblem of it is the sluggard's vineyard, "all grown over with thorns, nettles covering the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof broken down," Prov. xxiv. 30, 31. Can you really persuade yourselves that you are "going forth by the footsteps of the flock?" that the saints now in glory took the sinful liberty of thinking, speaking, and acting, that you do? that their soul's state and case cost them as few serious thoughts as yours have cost you? Do you think to stumble on a saving interest in Christ, a pardon, a heaven? No, you will not find it so. Up then, and be doing; set apart some time for considering of, and doing something effectually in your soul's case: that you may go to the ground of the matter, and get it rectified.

Secondly, It is a proper means for the recovery of backsliders, that they may "remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do the first works," Rev. ii. 5. There are not a few who some time a-day blossomed fair, in hopeful beginnings of religion, who are now withered. Their bones are dried, and there is no sap of that kind in them now; and by their sinning against light, they have provoked God to depart from them, so as there is no sap in ordinances, nor in providences, to them, neither; but these are all, as it were, blasted to them, and they are left in the unhappy case of the vineyard, Isa. v. 6, "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." And some are not only

withered, but are become noisome in their life and conversation: they have not only lost any life of religion they sometimes seemed to have, but their lusts are become rampant in them, as given up to vile affections, defiling the very outward man. "It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire," 2 Peter ii. 22.

O backsliders, your case is a fearful one! Heb. x. 38, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." What mind ye to do with it? Will ye continue in it, to your eternal ruin? Oh! no, pity your own souls; there is hope in Israel concerning this thing, bad as it is. Perhaps your hearts tell you that your case is now gone on too far for to be mended; but it is not so: that is but a satanical suggestion. God's Word says otherwise: Jer. iii. 1, "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." Isa. liv. 6, "I have called thee as—a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God." Wherefore, O backslider! bestir thyself to answer the Lord's call, and remember that some devils go not out but "by prayer and fasting," Matt. xvii. 21. Try this method then for your recovery: try it, as you would not be guilty of wilful dying of your disease. Our heavenly Father kindly meets returning prodigals: the returning backslider will be treated by him as a "dear son, a pleasant child," Jer. xxxi. 20. Return ye then, and "he will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten," Joel ii. 25. And as yet, "your bones shall flourish like an herb," Isa. lxvi. 14.

Thirdly, It is a proper means to prevent relapses, and to keep one's spiritual case right, when once it is right. Frequent stating of accounts keeps matters clear which otherwise might come to be perplexed and involved. And the case which, being on the decline, is taken in time, is easily righted, in comparison of that which has long run on: even as when Christ raised to life the young man of Nain, whom they were carrying out to the grave, he only touched the bier, and said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise," Luke vii. 14. But he wept and groaned once and again at the raising of Lazarus, who had been four days dead, John xi. 33, 35, 38. The unhealthy and sickly disposition of the souls of men, by reason of the remains of corruption that are always in the best, while here, makes the occasional performance of extraordinary duties now and then necessary, over and above the course of their ordinary and stated devotions.

Fourthly, It is a proper means of preparation for a time of trial. It is a piece of Christian prudence to foresee the evil, and hide one's self, while "the simple pass on, and are punished," Prov. xxii. 3. When God is threatening a land with his judgments, it becomes the inhabitants to take the alarm, and prepare to meet their God; and personal and family fasts are proper expedients for that end, since they who in sinning times "sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the midst thereof," stand fair to receive the mark for special favour in suffering times, Ezek. ix. 4. For all the lesser strokes and deliverances these nations have met with of late years, it is, alas! visible to sober men of whatever denomination, that we are not thereby reformed, nor

duly convinced of, far less humbled under, the causes of God's flaming controversy with us. And while there is a God to judge on the earth, we can have no reason to think that a generation chargeable with the guilt which we are chargeable with is in safety with such a load upon them; but that either God will, by an unordinary pouring out of his Spirit, awaken, humble, and make the land to mourn, or else, by some rousing stroke of judgment, will vindicate his own honour, injured to a pitch that our fathers arrived not at. And the less appearance there is of the former, there is the greater appearance of the latter. However, we seem to have no such security against it, as to render it unseasonable to keep personal and family fasts in that view, that we may mourn over our own sins, and the sins of the nations, and may solemnly commit ourselves and our families to the divine grace, mercy, and protection, whatever may be the occurrences of Providence in our day. None know what dark steps may be between them and the grave; and therefore it cannot be an unwise course, timely to take God in Christ for our guide through the mountains of darkness, for our protector in all dangers, and for our supporter and helper in the midst of trouble.

Lastly, It is a proper means to get matters clear for eternity, and so to make us a safe and comfortable passage out of this world. It was David's unspeakable comfort on his deathbed, that he could say of the God unto whom his spirit was about to return, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Jacob, being an old man, and a-dying, comfortably reflected on the

place and time, where and when, in the days of his youth, he had remarkable communion with God, received the blessing, and vowed the vow, Gen. xlviii. 3, with chapter xxviii. 10–22. Would one be in a condition to look death in the face, to pass safely and comfortably to the other world, there is not a more feasible means to reach it than this. Therefore,

1. Ye who are under doubts and fears, complaining that ye can never reach clear evidences for heaven, this Memorial is for you. No wonder they walk in the dark who will not be at so much pains to get light into their state. The obtaining of such light might of itself be a sufficient ground for such an exercise. Clear evidences for heaven are such an unspeakable comfort, and so hard to raise up amidst so much corruption of heart and life, that it is not at all strange they require something beyond the ordinary course of devotion and application to obtain the same. And this is a most feasible means for that purpose; for after one has got his soul humbled by a review of his sins, hath poured out his heart before the Lord in solemn confession of sin, and personally entered into, or renewed, covenant with God, by taking hold of God's covenant of grace, if he shall then take the matter in hand and examine himself as to the evidences of saving grace in him, they will then be as likely to appear clearly as ever.

2. Ye who are, one way or other, getting warnings of approaching death, this Memorial is for you. Do you observe your equals in years, or younger than you, carried off by death? Have you been at any time rescued from imminent danger of your

life, arising from some accident or unforeseen occurrence? Are ye now and then visited with sickness? Do you perceive your strength begin to fail, the pins of your tabernacle begin to be loosened? These and the like are loud providential calls to you to prepare for the other world. And preparation for that world is sufficient to found a call unto such extraordinary devotion: a prospect of approaching death may well be allowed to call one to set some time apart in order to prepare for it. Preparation for death is work to be done in time of health: and why should it be delayed, since you see that death is approaching? How unreasonable is it for men to leave that work to the sick-bed, where they will have enough ado to die, or may be deprived of their judgment, if they do at all get a sick-bed, and be not suddenly snatched away ere they or their friends are aware! No, sirs, ye know that death is coming; therefore, while ye are able, set some time apart for that very end to prepare for it, and to state matters clearly for eternity, otherwise ye are cruel to your own souls, by your negligence, making of death a leap in the dark into the other world.

3. *Lastly*, All without exception, who believe a heaven and a hell, this Memorial is for you. The eternal state is not a matter to venture upon at random. If you do really believe a life to come, ye cannot reasonably think that this is too much to make a suitable preparation for it. Their hearts are certainly more stout than holy, who, amidst so many instances of mortality as the world is still affording, are not thereby excited to set their own soul's case

in order, with an eye to death's coming about to their own door; and thus to set some time apart for that end, is little enough in a case of such vast importance.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

CONTAINING EXTRACTS ON THE SUBJECT OF PRIVATE FASTING FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS.

In the few introductory remarks which we have ventured to prefix to the foregoing Treatise, we have omitted to adduce the scriptural proofs on which the duty of fasting is founded, because we should thus have been interfering with the design, and anticipating the substance of the Memorial itself. And on the whole subject indeed, we have gladly left unsaid almost all that had occurred to us in the way of preface, when we were first urged by a Christian friend to assist in the publication of this little work of Boston's, just because we found in it a much better statement of all that was important or interesting than any we could have offered. It was not, however, on the same account that we made no quotations from the writings of theologians, for into this field the author has not entered; but because the voice of the Church is so harmonious that it seemed unnecessary to prove what very few have attempted to dispute. Yet, for the satisfaction

of those who may not have had opportunity of examining this point for themselves, we shall here throw together, in the form of an Appendix, a few extracts both from public Confessions of Faith and from the works of well-known authors in divinity. These must, in order to meet our narrow bounds, be very limited in number; but we have endeavoured to select them in such a way that while the reader has before him the testimony of different ages, and countries, and churches, to the harmony of Christian sentiment on the subject, he may also find remarks and directions that may be turned to practical account.

On such a subject we hold it needless to make any citation from writers previous to the era of the Reformation, because, in learning from them, the only danger is of being led too far. It is too well known to demand any proof, that from the times immediately subsequent to the apostolic age, quite down to that of Luther, the almost constant tendency both of the Christian teachers and the Church at large, was to hold in excessive veneration the virtue of self-denial, and to carry the practice of abstinence to excessive rigour. For this whole period, therefore, we shall count it enough to give a general view of the practice of the earlier and purer period of the Church, which, we believe, the reader will find fairly stated in the following account:—

"Although Christians did not by any means retire from the business of life, yet they were accustomed to devote many separate days entirely to examining their own hearts, and pouring them out before God, while they dedicated their life anew to him with uninterrupted prayers, in order that they

might again return to their ordinary occupations with a renovated spirit of zeal and seriousness, and with renewed powers of sanctification. These days of holy devotion, days of prayer and penitence, which individual Christians appointed for themselves, according to their individual necessities, were often a kind of fast days. In order that their sensual feelings might less distract and impede the occupation of their heart with its holy contemplations, they were accustomed on these days to limit their corporeal wants more than usual, or to fast entirely. In the consideration of this, we must not overlook the peculiar nature of that hot climate in which Christianity was first promulgated. That which was spared by their abstinence on these days was applied to the support of the poorer brethren."—Dr NEANDER, *Ap. Watson's Biblical Dict.*, *Art.* "*Fasting.*"

The sentiments of the Reformers on the subject of fasting we find recorded in many of their Confessions, from which it were easy to multiply extracts. The following citation is from *The Latter Confession of Helvetia*, written by the Pastors of Zurich, in the year 1566, and "publiquely approved and subscribed unto by very many churches of divers nations," and among others by the Church of Scotland :—

"Fasting is either public or private. In old times they celebrated public fasts in troublesome times, and in the affliction of the Church, wherein they abstained altogether from meat unto the evening, and bestowed all that time in holy prayers, the worship of God, and repentance. Private fasts are used of every one of us, according as every one

feeleth the spirit weakened in him. For so far forth he withdraweth that which might cherish and strengthen the flesh. All fasts ought to proceed from a free and willing spirit, and such a one as is truly humbled, and not framed to win applause and liking of men, much less to the end that a man might merit righteousness by them. But let every one fast to this end, that he may deprive the flesh of that which would cherish it, and that he may the more zealously serve God."

On the same subject the *Confession of Bohemia* or of the *Waldenses* says:—

"Touching true and Christian fasting, we teach that it is an outward work of faith, comprehending in it worship which is done by exercising the body to abstinency, joining therewith all prayers, and giving of alms, and that it is due to God alone; and that among Christians, according as their strength will suffer, and their affairs and business desire and permit, at what time soever they use it, in any society, either general or particular, it must be done without hypocrisy or superstition, as the Holy Scriptures do witness; and Paul, among other things, doth thus write of it:—*Let us approve ourselves as the ministers of God, by fasting* (2 Cor. vi.); and Christ saith, *Then shall they fast;* and again, Paul in another place, *that ye may give yourselves to prayer and fasting.*"

In the "*Treatise of Fasting,*" issued by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1565, we read:—

"A private fast is that which man or woman

doeth in secrete, and before their God, for such causes as their own conscience beareth record unto them. *(David and Hannah are here given as instances.)* Of this fasting speaketh our Maister, Jesus Christ, in these words: 'When ye fast, be not sad as the hypocrites.' To this private fasting, which standeth chiefly in a temperate dyet, and in pouring forth of our secrete thoughtes and necessities before God, can bee prescribed no certaine rule, certaine time, nor certaine ceremonies, but, as the causes and occasions why that exercise is used are divers, so are dyet, time, together with all other circumstances required to such fasting, put in the libertie of them that use it."

The zeal with which public fasts were formerly kept may be gathered from the following extract from the same Treatise, in which there is appointed a period of public humiliation, "from the one Sonday in the morning, till the next Sonday at night; albeit the straitnesse of abstinence is to be kept but two dayes onlie:"

"The abstinence is commanded to be from Saturday at eight of the clocke at night, till Sonday after the exercise at afternoone, that is, after five of the clocke, and then onlie bread and drinke, to bee used with great sobrietie, that the body craving necessary foode, the soule may be provoked earnestly to crave of God that which it most needeth,—that is, mercy for our former unthankfulnesse, and the assistance of his Holy Spirit in time to come." Yet it is added, "We do not binde the consciences of persons that be unable to beare the extremitie of the abstinence."

To the present Standards of our Church we have

already referred in our Preface, and shall now, in addition, only cite these words of our *Directory:* "Besides solemn and general fasts enjoined by authority, we judge that at other times congregations may keep days of fasting, as Divine Providence shall administer unto them special occasion: and also, that families may do the same, so it be not on days wherein the congregation to which they do belong is to meet for fasting, or other public duties of worship."

If we pass from public documents to the works of individual authors, we can refer to none more fitly than to *Calvin*, whose godliness, learning, and judgment, entitle him to all the deference that can be paid to human authority, and whom, on such a point at least, none need be afraid to trust, since his enemies themselves will be the last to charge him with any disposition to attach undue weight to aught that savours of mere ceremonial observance. The following are a few out of many passages that might be quoted from his writings:—

"Holy and true fasting hath three ends; for we use it either to make lean and subdue the flesh, that it should not wax wanton; or, that we may be better disposed to prayer and holy meditation; or, that it should be a testimony of our humbling ourselves before God, when we are willing to confess our guilt before him."—*Instit.*, *book* iv. *cap.* 12.

"In a common scourge, the whole people must accuse themselves, and openly confess their own guilt; but, if the hand of the Lord strike any private man, he ought to do the same, either alone or with his own family."—*Ibid.*

"We fast when we withdraw any of our wonted diet, either for one day or for a certain time, and charge ourselves with a severer and stricter abstinence in diet than ordinary. This fasting consisteth in three things—in time, in quality of meats, and in smallness of quantity. I mean, by time, that we should use those doings fasting, for which fasting is ordained; as, for example, if a man fast for common prayer, that he come empty unto it. Quality standeth in this, that all daintiness should be absent, and being content with common and baser meats, we should not stir up appetite with delicates. The rule of quantity is this, that we eat more sparingly, and less than we are wont—only for necessity, and not for pleasure."—*Ibid.*

From the simple Genevan Reformer we may appeal to divines of the Church of England, and we shall find the very same sentiments expressed, whether we take his own contemporaries or pass down to writers of a later date. The following citations are from one of the most illustrious prelates of that Church in a subsequent age—*Archbishop Ussher*:—

"Fasting is not any *naturall* abstinence, arising from sicknesse, nor *medicinall*, used to prevent or remove the same, nor *civill*, as in case of dearth or siege, nor yet *morall*, for the preservation of chastity, but *religious*, that is, referred to religious ends, for the furtherance of the speciall practice of repentance, and the enforcing of our prayers."—*Summe and Substance of Christian Religion.*

"Fasting is not properly a good work, but an help and assistance thereto, namely, to prayer."—*Ibid.*

"Fasting is a religious abstinence, commanded of God, whereby we forbear the use not only of meat and drink, but also of all other earthly comforts and commodities of this life, so far as necessity and comeliness will suffer; to the end that we, being humbled and afflicted in our souls, by the due consideration of our sins and punishment, may, grounded upon the promises of God, more earnestly and fervently call upon God, either for the obtaining of some singular benefit or special favour we have need of, or for the avoiding of some special punishment or notable judgment hanging over our heads, or already pressed upon us."—*Ibid.*

"The apostles themselves had need of this help of fasting for their further humiliation, and that even after the ascension of our Saviour Christ, when the graces of God were most abundant upon them. Wherefore it is a shameful thing for men to say that fasting is Jewish or ceremonial."—*Ibid.*

"A private fast is when, upon the view either of public causes not considered of by such as are in authority, or of the like, but more private occasions, as domestic or personal, a Christian is moved, either with his family, or special friends, or by himself, solitarily to humble himself before the Lord."—*Ibid.*

"Whom doeth God call to this exercise of fasting? All Christians enabled by understanding and grace to judge and to perform aright this weighty duty, unless any be exempted by present debility."—*Ibid.*

The next extract we shall present is from a writer who holds as high a rank among American divines as Calvin does among the European, and

who lived in an age not very far removed from our own—*President Edwards.* In his reflections on the life of Brainerd he writes thus:—

"But particularly, his example and success with regard to one duty, in an especial manner, may be of great use to both ministers and private Christians —I mean the duty of *secret fasting.* The reader has seen how much Mr Brainerd recommends this duty, and how frequently he exercised himself in it; nor can it well have escaped observation, how much he was owned and blessed in it, and of what great benefit it evidently was to his soul. Among all the many days he spent in secret fasting and prayer that he gives an account of in his diary, there is scarce an instance of one but what was either attended or soon followed in the apparent success, and a remarkable blessing in special increase, and consolations of God's Spirit—and very often before the day was ended. But it must be observed, that when he set about this duty he did it in good earnest, 'stirring himself up to take hold of God,' and 'continuing instant in prayer,' with much of the spirit of Jacob, who said to the angel, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.'"

The mention of the name of Brainerd reminds us of a class of men with whom the practice of private fasting appears never to have fallen into disuse, and by whom we believe it is at present maintained—the missionaries among the heathen. These men, engaged in an apostolic work, and full of an apostolic spirit, have been by God's help enabled, and by their own weakness compelled, to preserve this apostolic practice. Yet their work is not so very different from that of ordinary ministers, and the

work of ministers is not so different from that of private Christians, as to render what is binding on the first class of no obligation to the second and third, or, what is beneficial to the one of no benefit to the others.

We shall conclude these extracts by quoting a practical suggestion regarding this duty, from the memoirs of a servant of the Lord not long deceased, who was at once eminently laborious in the exercise of fasting, and eminently rich in grace, and singularly successful in his ministry:—

"It is, moreover, true, that the most eminent saints of ancient and later times have devoted frequent seasons to private fasting and prayer; and the practice may therefore be ranked among the essential means of rapid and extensive growth in grace. It were well for individuals, it were well for the Church, if the practice should revive and become common. There are some distinguished labourers in the vineyard of our Lord, who practise the essential duty here recommended, not so much by totally abstaining from food beyond the accustomed intervals, as by "denying themselves" at every meal, and using a spare and simple diet at all times—a course well adapted to preserve both mind and body in the best condition for biblical research and devotional exercises. This modification of the duty was much practised by Mr Payson, and strongly recommended by him to the members of his church. He would have them, when fasting on their own private account, not 'appear unto men to fast,' but come to the table which was spread for their families, with a cheerful countenance, and partake sparingly of its provisions."—*Memoirs of* E. Payson, D.D.

No. II.

CONTAINING EXTRACTS FROM SCRIPTURE ON THE SUBJECT OF FASTING.

Since the preceding extracts were made, a friend has kindly laid before me, arranged in chronological order, both examples of Fasting and precepts regarding it, from the Old and New Testament Scriptures. These will all be found, we believe, in the work itself, but it may be useful for the reader to have the most important of them brought under his eye at a single view. It must be kept in mind, however, that the following references embrace merely the more direct and obvious passages; many others having been omitted which bear less expressly, though not, perhaps, less certainly, on the subject.

I.—Examples of Fasting from the Old Testament.

B. C. 1406.—The Israelites being twice vanquished by the tribe of Benjamin, "went up, and came unto the house of God, and FASTED that day until even, and inquired of the Lord, whether they should yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin;" "and the Lord said, Go up," and the Lord helped them, and "smote Benjamin before Israel."—Judges xx. 26.

B. C. 1120.—The Israelites being sore pressed by the Philistines, made a solemn assembly at Miz-

peh, and "FASTED on that day," and made confession of their sins; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for them, and the "Lord heard him," and he saved them out of the hand of the Philistines.—1 Samuel vii. 3–13.

B. C. 1034.—When the "Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David," "he besought God for the child, and FASTED."—2 Samuel xii. 16.

That fasting must have been a constant practice with David, is evident from the following passages:

B. C. 1062.—"My knees are weak through FASTING, and my flesh faileth of fatness."—Psa. cix. 24.

"As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth. I humbled my soul with FASTING, and my prayers returned into mine own bosom."—Psa. xxxv. 13.

B. C. 1021.—"When I wept and chastened my soul with FASTING, that was to my reproach."—Psa. lxix. 10.

B. C. 899.—We find that when Elijah denounced judgments upon Ahab, by God's direction, that Ahab "humbled himself before the Lord, and FASTED;" and in consequence, the Lord said he would "not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days."—1 Kings xxi. 17-29.

B. C. 896.—When Jehoshaphat was told that a great multitude were coming against him in battle, "he set himself to seek the Lord" in his distress, and "proclaimed a FAST throughout all Judah, and they came out of all the cities of Judah to seek the Lord;" and we find that they were heard, and "the Lord made them to rejoice over their enemies."—2 Chron. xx. 1-30.

B. C. 862.—When Jonah, by God's direction, entered Nineveh, and cried, saying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown, the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a FAST, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not."—Jonah iii. 4-10.

B. C. 538.—"In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem; and he set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with FASTING, and sackcloth, and ashes."—Dan. ix. 1-3.

B. C. 537.—After Daniel was cast into the den of lions, "King Darius went to his palace and passed the night FASTING;" for "he had set his heart on Daniel to deliver him."—Dan. vi. 14-18.

B. C. 510.—When the Jews heard the commandment of King Ahasuerus (which was given at the instigation of wicked Haman), that all the Jews should be destroyed, "there was great mourning, and FASTING, and weeping."—Esther iv. 3.

B. C. 457.—Ezra proclaimed a FAST at the river Ahava, "to afflict ourselves before the Lord our God, to seek of him a right way for us and for our little ones. So we FASTED and besought our God for this, and he was entreated of us."—Ezra viii. 21.

"And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of

my head, and of my beard, and sat down astonied. And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God!"—"Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water; for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away."—Ezra ix. 3-5; x. 6.

B. C. 446.—When Nehemiah was told by Hanani of the great affliction and reproach of those Jews who had escaped the captivity, and of the situation in which Jerusalem was left, "he mourned certain days, and FASTED, and prayed before the God of heaven."—Neh. i. 1-11.

B. C. 445.—We find the Israelites keeping a solemn FAST, and making confession of sins.—Neh. ix. 1-3.

II.—Examples of Fasting from the New Testament.

A. D. .—"And there was one Anna a prophetess, she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with FASTINGS and prayers, night and day."—Luke ii. 36, 37.

A. D. 41.—Cornelius practised it, for we read, "Four days ago I was FASTING until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house."—Acts x. 30.

A. D. 45.—"As they ministered to the Lord and FASTED."—Acts xiii. 2, 3.

A. D. 46.—"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and prayed with FASTING."—Acts xiv. 23.

III.—COMMANDS TO FAST.

"Also on the tenth day of this seventh month, there shall be a day of atonement; it shall be an holy convocation unto you, *and ye shall afflict your souls*, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. For whatsoever soul it shall be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people."—Lev. xxiii. 27, 29.

"Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with FASTING, and with weeping, and with mourning."—Joel ii. 12.

"Moreover when ye FAST."—Matt. vi. 16-18. Though this is not a positive *command* to fast, yet it implies still more; for the Saviour herein *takes for granted* that it is a well-established fact that his disciples must be in the habit of fasting. And besides, he classes the duty of fasting along with the duties of almsgiving and prayer: "When thou doest thine alms—when thou prayest—when thou FASTEST."—Ver. 2, 6, 17.

"And then shall they FAST."—Matt. ix. 15. Here the Saviour intimates, that after he should ascend up to glory, his believing people should then

fast; and this we find fulfilled in Acts xiii. 2, 3; xiv. 23.

"That ye may give yourselves to FASTING and prayer."—1 Cor. vii. 5.

"In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience," &c. &c., in "FASTINGS."—2 Cor. vi. 4, 5.

THE END.

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